KROPOTKIN
AND THE RISE OF REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM
1872–1886

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TO THE MEMORY OF MY PARENTS

LESLIE AND JESSIE HUNT

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Part III Kropotkin and the development of anarchist views of collective revolutionary action (1872–1886)

PREFACE

Anarchism, encompassing as it does such a broad spectrum of ideas, cannot be as precisely defined in ideological terms as marxism, nor has it, outside Spain, made the same impact on twentieth-century European history. It is perhaps not altogether surprising, therefore, that the anarchist movement which emerged from the struggles in the First International has tended to attract attention from scholars primarily in terms of its relevance to the development of marxism. Interest has focussed mainly on the life and work of Bakunin whose quarrel with Marx was such an important feature of the early history of marxism. Peter Kropotkin, however, was the chief exponent of the ideas of the European anarchist movement, which for the most part, only developed after Bakunin's death.

The study of anarchism as a historical movement, in spite of notable exceptions such as Maitron's work on the French anarchist movement,[1] has tended until recent years to be neglected. It now evokes a much keener interest both amongst scholars and the public at large. This is perhaps partly because of an increasing scepticism about the efficacy of conventional politics and a tendency for the aggrieved to take to the streets which have given a new point and relevance to the anarchist critique of the state. At the same time there has been an upsurge of 'green' and 'community' politics which, in common with anarchism and particularly anarchist communism, focus on free association in community initiative and action and insist on the need for balance and harmony between humankind and the rest of the natural world.

Nevertheless, the history of the European anarchist movement and the anarchist communist ideas which have tended to dominate its thinking and activity are only just beginning to receive the attention they deserve. There is still a dearth of modern general histories both of

the movement itself and of the Anti-authoritarian International out of which the anarchist movement developed. At the same time biographies of leading anarchists usually lack that solid, informative, historical context which Stafford provided in his study of the career of Paul Brousse.[2]

The first serious biographical study of Kropotkin which was written by George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumovic appeared only in 1950.[3] As well as lacking references and documentation it also suffered from restrictions placed on the authors by the inaccessibility at that time of the important Kropotkin archives in Amsterdam and the Soviet Union. In 1972 a biography by the Soviet scholar, N. M. Pirumova, was published in Moscow, a study which, although not a comprehensive biography, did utilise the rich Russian archives to provide an informative and indeed even sympathetic account particularly of Kropotkin's later life.[4] In 1976 Martin Miller produced a biography, which, in contrast with that of Woodcock and Avakumovic, did contain careful and valuable documentation and did benefit from the author's comprehensive study of archives both in the West and in the Soviet Union.[5] None of these studies, however, attempted any sort of in depth examination of Kropotkin's development as a revolutionary in the historical context of the Western European anarchist movement – even though his life and work were such an integral and indeed vibrant part of it. Miller, in reaction to the tendency of Soviet historians to reduce biographies to negative or positive features in the marxist historical landscape, actually seemed anxious to avoid doing so.

I have attempted to supplement the general biographical works with a more searching study of Kropotkin's development situated firmly in the historical context of the development of the European anarchist movement. This is something that cannot really be done in a general biography of someone whose life and work were associated with the anarchist movement in so many countries over a period of almost fifty years. The present study, therefore, whilst endeavouring to show the continuity in the development of Kropotkin's life and career as a whole, concentrates on that period when he was most intimately and actively involved in the European anarchist movement, a period which began with his commitment to bakuninism in 1872 and ended with his arrival in England in 1886 after some twelve years of energetic activity as a revolutionary agitator first in Russia, then in Switzerland and France.

In my treatment of sources I have devoted a good deal of attention to

the anarchist press, particularly that with which Kropotkin was most closely associated – namely, *Le Révolté*, a rich source of evidence which has remained largely untapped even by Maitron. In the case of the anarchists the main channel of communication between each other and with the masses, apart from personal contacts and public meetings, was provided by their newspapers. The very determination and persistence which Kropotkin, the Jurassians and the anarchists of Lyon displayed in struggling to keep their newspapers going in the face of persecution bears eloquent testimony to this. Kropotkin himself actually stressed the importance of the study of the anarchist press in arriving at any real understanding of the anarchist movement and the ideas that have inspired it.

> Socialist literature has never been rich in books. It is written for workers, for whom one penny is money, and its main force lies in its small pamphlets and its newspapers . . . There remains nothing but to take collections of papers and read them all through, the news as well as the leading articles, the former perhaps even more than the latter. Quite a new world of social relations and methods of thought and action is revealed by this reading, which gives an insight into what cannot be found anywhere else, – namely, the depth and the moral force of the movement, the degree to which men are involved with the new theories, their readiness to carry them out in their daily life and to suffer for them.[6]

One final point – all the quotations, which are mainly from French sources, have been translated into English. This has presented a few problems with regard to some words which do not have a precise English equivalent. I have had particular difficulty, for example, with such words as *corps de métier*, *syndicat* and *société de résistance* because the term 'trade unions' is so often used and understood to mean the reformist form of trade unionism with which the labour movement in Britain has so often been closely associated. Where the original French seems to be more precise than the translation, I have given the French term in brackets.

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INTRODUCTION

'Peter Kropotkin is without doubt one of those who have contributed perhaps most – perhaps even more than Bakunin or Elisée Reclus – to the elaboration and propagation of anarchist ideas.'[1] So wrote his contemporary, Malatesta, Italy's most famous militant and theorist of the time, who, if always a friend and comrade of Kropotkin, was also one of his sharpest critics.

A prominent revolutionary agitator as well as distinguished geographer, Kropotkin had a remarkable capacity for communicating easily with both the educated bourgeoisie and the oppressed classes. If he lacked the dramatic presence of Michael Bakunin and the oratorical brilliance of such figures as Sebastien Faure and Louise Michel, there was nevertheless a compelling persuasiveness in his writing which few could match. This persuasiveness sprang partly from his passionate and uncompromising concern for social justice but it was also due in no small part to the way he linked the development of anarchism to the development of science.

Kropotkin shared the optimism of the positivists in the limitless possibilities of the inductive deductive methods of scientific enquiry. In so doing he perhaps went further than Proudhon or even Reclus in rejecting as unscientific all metaphysics and the justification they gave to the power of church and state, whether emanating from the christian belief in an all-powerful god or from the hegelian concept of the universal spirit. In 1913 he went so far as to write a particularly savage attack on Bergson, the French philosopher, for denigrating science by arguing that intuition played an important part in scientific discovery.[2] Certainly he recognised the difficulties of attaining the same level of exactitude in sociological studies as in physics and chemistry. He did not share for instance Taine's sweeping assertions about history as a sort of exact science and even in his youth, in a letter to his brother

Alexander, had pointed out that the work of the historian was necessarily coloured by his political beliefs.[3] He argued however that there was a special relationship between science and anarchism. Scientists of the past had always had some grand concept of social development which had given them the hypotheses or inspiration for their researches (Darwin's hypothesis regarding the role of the struggle for existence in the origin of species, for example, had been inspired by the conceptions of Malthus and bourgeois economy); in the contemporary world this inspiration for scientific research came from anarchism. In a letter to Guillaume in 1903 he claimed that it was now necessary to be an anarchist to be able to write about history, political economy or even biology.[4] Moreover, inspired by the synthetic approach pioneered by Comte and Spencer, he envisaged the possibility of arriving at a synthetic philosophy based on the mechanical interpretation of phenomena and embracing the whole of nature including the life of societies, which would provide an answer to the question of how progress could be achieved in terms of the well-being of the generality of mankind. Such a philosophy he argued was being elaborated partly by the study of the sciences and partly by anarchy. Anarchy, therefore, was no longer just a utopian theory – it represented the current of thought of the age.

> The philosophy which is being elaborated by study of the sciences on the one hand and anarchy on the other, are two branches of one and the same great movement of minds: two sisters walking hand in hand. And that is why we can affirm that anarchy is no longer a utopia, a theory; it is a philosophy which impresses itself on our age.[5]

Kropotkin nevertheless rejected the ideas of absolute knowledge and truth which characterised both the rigid metaphysics of religion and the more dynamic dialectics of Hegel, and reflecting the less extreme positivist views of Claude Bernard, he actually envisaged the development of scientific knowledge in terms of an ever-changing approximation to truth. In his view there was something in the essential nature of anarchism with its insistence on free association and interaction between individuals which echoed this basic feature of science, something entirely lacking in other forms of socialism, particularly marxism. The latter he claimed was not in any case scientific at all. Marx and Engels, in confining themselves to the dialectical method in their study of human society and political economy had failed to provide real scientific proof for any of their affirmations about so called scientific socialism. 'Capital is a marvellous revolutionary pamphlet',

Kropotkin declared in a letter to Guillaume, 'but its scientific significance is nil'.[6] The basic tenet of historical materialism that bourgeois society was going to give birth to socialism, apart from being essentially determinist and therefore exercising an inhibiting effect on the action of revolutionaries, was based on a false claim about the inevitable concentration of capital which had been discredited by the observations of Cherkesov and others. Marx's theory of value was a naïve formulation based on Ricardo's assertion of a direct relationship between labour and value, which, in the elaboration of the idea of surplus value, failed to recognise the real cost of labour measured in terms of poverty and deprivation; and the evil of the present system was not that there was a surplus value of production which went to the capitalist but that there should be any surplus value at all. As regards his socialist ideas Marx had simply used hegelian dialectics to repeat what the utopian socialists had said so well before him. He had failed to break free from the old metaphysics and his followers, the social democrats, bogged down in abstractions which hid careless analysis, had gone on repeating the formulas of progress their master had believed to be vaguely true fifty years before, without verifying or exploring them. Unlike the advocates of scientific materialism who were less concerned with the relationship between humanity and the natural universe and focussed their attention more narrowly on economics and history, Kropotkin clearly adopted an essentially holistic approach in his claim regarding the scientific basis of anarchism. In *Anarchism: its Philosophy and Ideal* he argued that advances in the natural sciences had demonstrated that the harmony observed in the universe was simply a temporary equilibrium established between all forces which could only last on the condition of being continually modified and representing at every instant the resultant of all conflicting actions. Making a direct comparison between the breakdown of harmony which produced eruptions of volcanos in nature and revolutions in human society, he insisted that the process regarding the achievement of harmony applied as much to the evolution of human society as it did to anything else in the natural universe. And it was this process, which, in his view, found direct expression in the anarchist conception of society where harmony was sought in a delicate balance resulting from the development of free associations which were constantly being modified to meet the multiple aspirations of all.

Kropotkin was very much influenced in all this both by Darwin's work in producing scientific evidence to substantiate the idea of evol-

ution and the advances in biology, zoology and anthropology which followed from it: he believed that in addition to making a clear break with the old metaphysics, they had made it possible to reconstruct not only the history of organisms but also the history of human institutions. But he had doubts about the importance Darwin attached to natural selection in the origin of species, particularly the idea of the struggle for existence associated with it which, as developed first by Spencer and then Huxley, conflicted sharply with Kropotkin's idea of harmony achieved through a delicate balance between all the forces in society and actually provided justification for the capitalist system. In direct response to Huxley's essay, 'The Struggle for Existence in Human Society',[7] which delineated the struggle for existence as a pitiless combat of each against all where evolution could be either progressive or regressive, Kropotkin therefore elaborated his own ideas of evolution which identified mutual aid as a major factor in the evolutionary process which, unlike combat between the members of the same species, always led to progressive evolution.

He was convinced that Darwin himself in later life recognised that the associated struggle against the environment was more important in the struggle for life than the individual struggle within the species and he maintained that the great scientist's ideas had been misrepresented by the social darwinists. Kropotkin nevertheless actually derived the inspiration for his work on mutual aid from his own observations of animal behaviour in Siberia and from a lecture given in 1879 by the Russian zoologist, Karl Kessler, who had suggested that in addition to the law of mutual struggle there was the law of mutual aid which was more important in the struggle for life and progressive evolution.[8] To substantiate this law of mutual aid he brought together a mass of evidence drawn from the work of zoologists, anthropologists, sociologists and historians. He concluded that this evidence showed that the vast majority of animal species lived in societies and found, in association, the best weapons for the struggle for life understood in 'the wide darwinian sense not as a struggle for the sheer means of existence but as a struggle against all natural conditions unfavourable to the species'. And he declared that those animal species in which mutual aid had attained its greatest development were invariably the most numerous, prosperous and open to further progress. In the case of human beings the strength of the mutual aid had given mankind the possibility of developing those institutions which had enabled it to survive in its hard

struggle against nature and to progress, whatever the misfortunes in its history.

Against social drawinism and in support of anarchism, Kropotkin was undoubtedly convinced that his survey of animal and human behaviour had established the importance of the factor of mutual aid for progressive evolution. At the same time he was well aware of the limitations of that survey. In a letter to Landauer in 1903 about the German edition of his book, he firmly resisted any change to the title, *Mutual Aid: a Factor of Evolution* (1902), which would give the erroneous impression that he had answered the question about *how* mutual aid affected evolution.[9] He went on to say that several years further work would be required to provide some sort of answer to such a question because, in response to the growing importance of lamarckism, he would be obliged to show that species developed through the effect of direct accommodation to the environment, isolation etc., without an internal struggle for survival between its members. Clearly Kropotkin would have liked to carry his work on mutual aid further by enlisting the support of lamarckian ideas against those darwinists who insisted on a bitter struggle between members of the same species as the major factor in evolution. And in fact he contributed a number of articles to the *Nineteenth Century and After* on the subject of the inheritance of acquired characteristics which, although acknowledging the limitations of the research done so far and the difficulty of verifying its claims, were very sympathetic to lamarckism.[10] Certainly lamarckism was gaining ground in the first decades of the present century but the rediscovery at this time of the experiments of Mendel, an obscure German scientist in the 1850s, was already laying the foundation of the study of modern genetics which ultimately would deprive lamarckism of any real scientific validity.

Meanwhile, such concessions about the need for further study did not prevent Kropotkin from going on to claim that mutual aid was the mainspring for the development of morality in human society. Again, although he insisted on the continuity between Darwin's ideas and his own, he took his inspiration from someone else, in this instance J.-M. Guyau who in his *Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction* (1884) had argued that the moral instinct in human beings required no coercion, compulsory obligation or sanction from above but developed as a result of the very need they had to live a full, intensive, productive life. Kropotkin declared that it was in the mutual aid instinct which

Darwin had considered to be 'more permanently at work in social animals than even the purely egotistic instict of direct self preservation', that the origin ws to be found of 'those feelings of benevolence and of that partial identification of the individual with the group which were the starting-point of all the higher ethical feelings'. And those ethical feelings, according to Kropotkin, developed into the general conceptions of right and wrong containing 'the fundamental principles of equity and mutual sympathy, which applied to all sentient beings, just as principles of mechanics derived from observation on the surface of the earth applied to matter in space'.[11] Far from giving a lesson in a-moralism, as had been argued by individualists like Stirner and Nietzsche and darwinists like Spencer and Huxley, nature was the first ethical teacher of man. Society in the absence of authority as exercised through church and state would become neither the community of egotists celebrated by the former nor a community of warring individuals portrayed by the latter. In *Anarchist Morality* he contended that in fact it was the oppression and exploitation generated by the church and more particularly the capitalist state which had undermined the very social cohesion on which the development of morality depended. An anarchist society where the liberty of the individual would be constrained by nothing but the necessity of finding cooperation, support and sympathy amongst his neighbours would actually foster that human solidarity out of which the higher ideals of justice and equity evolved. As for the individualists, he claimed that in their rejection of any conception of right and wrong and their exaltation of the individuality of the few without concern for the oppression of the many, they were advocating a foolish egoism which contained the negation of its own ideal regarding the attainment of 'a complete, broad and more perfectly attainable individuality'.[12]

Although Kropotkin insisted on the importance of the development of morality out of the practice of mutual aid, he recognised that the self-assertiveness of the individual was also an important factor for progressive evolution because it helped break the bonds that society imposed on the individual when institutions began to petrify. At the same time however, he argued, in so far as this same self-assertiveness also lead both individuals and groups to struggle with each other for supremacy, it militated against the development of morality and progressive evolution. There had been in fact two major tendencies at work throughout the history of human societies, he claimed, the one which was the popular creative tendency where people worked out for

themselves the institutions necessary to make life in society possible, and the other which was the authoritarian, oppressive tendency where priests, sorcerers and military leaders endeavoured to establish their power over everyone else. It was this latter tendency acting in conflict with the popular tendency which had been responsible for the development of those political and economic systems where the privileged few established and maintained their power over, and at the expense of, the majority. The social tensions created by these systems of which the modern capitalist state was the most repressive example, inevitably led to revolutions – revolutions which, in spite of their final defeat in the face of a resurgence of the forces of reaction, always resulted in some reassertion of popular initiative and progress towards a free society. Kropotkin of course associated anarchism with the popular creative tendency as he associated statism with its opposite. He saw evidence of free communalism, for example, in the assertion of independence from feudal authority by medieval cities whose social organisation had been based on guild associations. It was only in the French Revolution however, that he saw the beginnings of socialism and the divisions between authoritarian and anti-authoritarian within it which were to produce state socialism on one hand and anarchism on the other.

Kropotkin saw the beginnings of the ideas of state socialism partly in the jacobinist communism of the babouvist conspiracies of 1794–5 which had later re-emerged in the ideas of Weitling, Cabet and Blanqui and partly in Saint-Simonism, the communism of Blanc and the collectivism of Pecqueur and Vidal which had been associated with the 1848 revolution – all of which, in his view, to a greater or less degree advocated a form of socialism which transformed the individual into a mere functionary of the state. Anarchist ideas by contrast, had originated amongst the *enragés*, the uncompromising agitators of the French Revolution who had demanded popular control as well as real economic equality; these ideas had found expression in Godwin's idea of anti-statist social revolution and been developed in Fourier's proposals for socialistic communities based on free association, the cooperative socialism of Owen and the mutualism of Proudhon.

But whilst Kropotkin associated the origins of the two currents of socialist ideas with particular thinkers and agitators and recognised the importance of the latter's role in helping to clarify the vague ideas of the masses, he nevertheless believed that socialism as a social movement, like all others, originated from among the people and maintained its vitality and creative force only so long as it remained a movement of the

people. The ideas of Chalier and Lange which foreshadowed the utopian vision of Fourrier, had been associated with the communalist movement in Paris and the provinces in the French Revolution. The socialist ideas of both currents, in spite of the dismal failure of state socialist schemes in the revolution of 1848, had gained a new strength and significance in the development of the International Workingmen's Association in the sixties. It was the popular insurrections sparked off by the Paris Commune of 1871 which had finally demonstrated the ineffectiveness of state socialism and the need for free and independent communes to carry through the social revolution. Latin peoples had been particularly responsive to the lesson of the Commune of Paris, hence their sympathetic response to the anarchism of Bakunin and the strength of the Anti-authoritarian International in Latin countries. Germanic peoples with their authoritarian traditions, however, had taken a quite different lesson from the Commune and had supported the authoritarian socialism of Marx, hence the strength of social democracy in these countries.

Historically speaking, in terms of progressive evolution the marxists had made a major error in Kropotkin's view by encouraging the persistence of the authoritarian tendency in the socialist movement. Only the masses themselves, he insisted, could carry through a social revolution. And one of his greatest anxieties was that unless anarchists helped the people define and clarify their ideals they would go on, as they had done before, choosing methods which were political and parliamentary and therefore inconsistent with their realisation. Even if the masses requires neither detailed programmes nor blueprints to guide them in the building up of a free and just society, it was essential they understood the need to take political and economic control into their own hands from the very beginning if they were to be able to do it. For all its communalism and populism, the revolt of the Paris Commune had ended in such a terrible defeat because the people had clung onto the old governmental prejudice, abandoning popular power and initiative to an elected government which had failed to keep in touch with the creative energy of the people and to consolidate popular support by carrying through a social revolution. Kropotkin endeavoured to substantiate his argument by an exploration of the possibilities of creating an anarchist communist society in *The Conquest of Bread* (1892) and *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1898) – books in which he developed his economic ideas as well as his views concerning education which are associated with them.

In *The Conquest of Bread* Kropotkin sought to demonstrate the importance and practicability of establishing everyone's right to well-being from the first day of the revolution, by the people themselves taking possession of all social wealth so that the exploiters could no longer appropriate the product of the labour of others and it could be distributed amongst all members of society according to need. There were already examples in contemporary society – the organisation of national libraries, public water supplies, the lifeboat service – of the recognition of the principle 'to each according to his/her need'. Attacking the collectivists and social democrats for seeking only the collectivisation of the instruments of production, he argued that everything was so interdependent in modern society that it would be impossible to reform the part without the whole – half measures would simply disrupt the system of production and spread discontent. For the worker, shelter, food and clothing were as much instruments of production as tools and machines. Moreover, the wages system which belonged to the capitalist system of production had an inbuilt tendency to promote inequality and injustice: it was impossible to determine the value of the individual contribution to production accurately and fairly, there would always be those unable to earn sufficient for themselves and their dependents, whilst the marxist distinction between qualified and simple work would inevitably reintroduce the inequalities of present society. To proclaim the abolition of private property with regard to the instruments of production and then to deny it with regard to everything else was to attempt to base society on two totally opposing principles: such a society would either end up reverting back to the system of private property or transforming itself into a communist society.

Kropotkin did not accept that problems of scarcity would make the abolition of the wages system and distribution according to need impossible except as a long term aim, as the marxists and social democrats claimed. Shortages occasioned by the disruption of production during the first days of the revolution would be solved by a system of rationing organised by local communities. Given the modern advances in scientific knowledge, the enthusiasm and commitment of the masses would soon ensure the production of goods sufficient to meet the needs of society. Indeed he was convinced that production could be so improved and expanded in an anarchist communist society that each adult between the ages of twenty or twenty-two and forty-five or fifty would only need to work a five-hour day to provide for everyone's needs. In *Fields, Factories and Workshops* he went on to discuss in

some detail the defects of contemporary food production and how they could be eradicated in a system more appropriate to the development of natural resources and the satisfaction of human need. In so doing he denounced the pernicious effects of the theory of Malthus, which, in declaring that population always presses on the means of subsistence, continued to provide a kind of scientific argument about the inevitability of poverty in support of the present system, even though it had been discredited by the enormous increase in man's productive powers during the nineteenth century. 'We have no right to complain of over-population, and no need to fear it in the future', he declared, 'Our means of obtaining from the soil whatever we want, under *any* climate and upon *any* soil, have lately been improved at such a rate that we cannot foresee yet what is the limit of productivity of a few acres of land'.[13] The evidence for this claim was challenged by the proponents of neo-malthusianism who, arguing that success in combating poverty depended on restricting population growth, had founded a movement in 1879 to promote and spread the knowledge of birth control. Kropotkin, however, who from the first had sharply criticised the movement as a diversion from the revolutionary struggle, whilst acknowledging the benefits to the poor of limiting the size of their families did not think the arguments of neo-malthusianism deserved serious consideration.[14]

He claimed that the main problem about the modern system of production was that as a system organised purely to secure profits for the few it could not function effectively and efficiently in providing for the needs of society as a whole. Preoccupation with the maximisation of profit through the division of labour as extolled by bourgeois economists had led to over-specialisation where industrialised countries had failed to develop their agricultural resources, preferring to concentrate on the production of manufactured goods at the expense of turning the workers into slaves of huge machines and having to face recurring economic crises as other nations became industrialised and the competition for markets intensified. Such a system, he warned, carried within it the seeds of its own decay. Taking a line which contrasted sharply with that of the marxists who saw in specialisation and the centralisation of production an essential part of the historical process leading to socialism, Kropotkin argued that increasing specialisation actually conflicted with the tendencies of human life where variety was the characteristic feature of a territory and its inhabitants. In place of over-specialisation there would have to

be an integration and combination of labour where every able-bodied human being in free association with others would do intellectual as well as manual labour and work in both field and workshop whilst every region would produce and consume most of its own agricultural and manufactured produce. Inspired by Fourier's vision of free association in agreeable work Kropotkin contended that in a society based on the integration of labour where the individual could achieve the fullest development of his/her capacities and interests, enjoy varied activity, and work in a healthy environment where the factory was no longer divorced from the countryside, work would no longer be a burden and the level and quality of production would be much higher than under the present system.

A system of integrated labour implied a complete change in the system of education. Kropotkin, therefore, advocated integral education where everyone would be educated in the use of hand and brain to end the pernicious division between intellectual and manual work which depressed the achievement levels of everyone and slowed up scientific and technical progress.

No other leading anarchist either before or since has associated anarchism as closely as Kropotkin did with the development of science. Critical though they were of metaphysics and dialectics, Proudhon and Bakunin were strongly influenced by both in their language and thought. Bakunin was anxious that science should be the property of all because it would point to the general causes of individual suffering and reveal the general conditions necessary for the real emancipation of individuals in society. But he was not prepared to go any further in recognising close, positive links between free socialism and science. He denounced as monstrous any attempt to force practical life into strict conformity with the abstract data of science: science should never interfere with the practical organisation of society for, apart from always being imperfect, it concerned itself with abstraction and was forced therefore by its nature to ignore the lives of real individuals. He attacked the marxists who wanted to accord a powerful position to savants not only because he believed they would be corrupted by power just as surely as everyone else in authority but also because he was convinced that they could only be intellectual socialists since scientific thought was not directly related to practical experience. The workers for all their ignorance and prejudice were instinctively socialist as a result of their experience of oppression; the development of socialist thought which they lacked would be achieved through the develop-

ment of the practical action in fighting oppression. Reclus, as a scientist, made a much clearer break with the language and thought of metaphysics and dialectics. He was in fact much closer to Kropotkin than any other major figure in the anarchist movement. Nevertheless there are clear differences between the two men in the way they related science to anarchism. Reclus saw revolution as the culmination of an evolutionary process where the final resistance to change was overcome whereas Kropotkin saw it in the more elaborate terms of a breakdown in harmony to produce a new readjustment between all the forces in society. Even though he believed that a knowledge of natural laws and history was essential to enable the masses to define their ideals and discover the way to secure the realisation of those ideals, Reclus did not share Kropotkin's preoccupation with the idea of anarchist communism as the basis of a synthetic philosophy, and rather like Bakunin he focussed his attention on the democratisation of science. Partly because he seems to have had much less structured and detailed views of history and evolution and partly because he was more concerned to denounce the enslaving effect on men's minds of religion, Reclus was less inclined than Kropotkin to identify marxism, social democracy or even particular races with the authoritarian tendency of history and regressive evolution. He seems in fact to have been much more interested in the development of the individual than Kropotkin, seeing here the beginning of that evolutionary and revolutionary process which would culminate in the creation of a free and just society.

Other leading anarchists were actually very critical of the way Kropotkin linked anarchism with science. Malatesta claimed that what he called 'scientific anarchism', like 'scientific socialism', had been derived from scientism, which, as a result of a belief in the unlimited possibilities of science, had equated scientific truth with human aspirations when it really only concerned the discovery of facts and the laws governing the inevitable occurrence and repetition of those facts. Not everything in the universe could be subjected to a mechanistic explanation: if it could, everything would be predestined and there would be no point in the struggle to create a better society. Kropotkin's idea of anarchism as a synthetic philosophy was, in Malatesta's view, a nonsense. Anarchy was an aspiration which could be achieved through the exercise of the human will. It could not be equated with a mechanical conception of the universe and should not be confused with either science or any given philosophical system even though it could profit from advances in science and philosophic thought. He rejected

Kropotkin's view about the tendency to harmony in nature, declaring that it was more a question of struggling against the disharmonies of nature in human society. Such a view about harmony as a law of nature created undue optimism about the inevitable development of an anarchist communist society. Malatesta also argued that Kropotkin had underestimated the difficulties of producing sufficient goods to meet everyone's needs: it was, for example, by no means certain that the peasants would immediately adopt the new forms of cultivation which science indicated would be necessary to realise the great potentialities of agriculture outlined in *Fields, Factories and Workshops*. His approach was not truly scientific because he tended only to admit facts which supported his passionately-held beliefs. 'Kropotkin', he declared, 'was too passionate to be an accurate observer.'[15] This criticism of Kropotkin for a partial selection of evidence was reiterated by James Guillaume who, as an anarchist and historian himself, had reservations about his friend's qualifications as a historian even though he did not share Malatesta's reservations about his competence as a scientist. 'You have a theory and you look for facts to group together and interpret to support that theory.'[16]

Malatesta clearly believed that it was not possible to combine the cold objectivity of the scientist in any sort of satisfactory way with the passion and commitment of the revolutionist. Yet it was the eloquent combination of anarchism with science which, for all its weaknesses, enabled Kropotkin to secure a hearing for anarchist communism in all classes of society as well as to assure it a place in both the intellectual and working class history of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

PART I

Kropotkin and the development of the theory of anarchist communism

1

Bakuninism

From reform to revolution: 1872 Kropotkin's first contact with the International and bakuninism

'I soon noticed that no revolution whether peaceful or violent had ever taken place without the new ideals having clearly penetrated into the very class whose economical and political privileges were to be assailed'.[1] So Kropotkin observed when he first embarked on his career as a revolutionist. No one could have been more truly a member of the privileged class than Kropotkin himself.

In 1862, when twenty years old, he graduated as an officer from the exclusive military academy, the Corps of Pages at St Petersburg, after serving with some distinction as personal page to the Tsar himself. At this point his loyalty had not been in question. Indeed, just before the passing out ceremony he had taken a leading part in extinguishing a dangerous fire started by an arsonist in the centre of St Petersburg. Yet rather than pursue the possibility of a brilliant career at court he elected to serve in a newly created and virtually unknown regiment in a remote region of Siberia. Revolted from his boyhood by a system where the nobility maintained an extravagant and useless existence based on serfdom, he had expected a radical improvement in the social system when the new Tsar liberated the serfs in 1861. By 1862 it was becoming clear to him that this was a vain hope; signs of a coming reaction already began to manifest themselves in the behaviour of Alexander II, particularly after the fire. Kropotkin later recalled how at the passing out ceremony itself the Tsar called the new officers to him and, after quietly congratulating them, roared threats of the most dire consequences should any of them prove disloyal: 'His voice failed; his face was peevish, full of that expression of blind rage which I saw in my childhood on the faces of landlords when they threatened their serfs, "to

skin them under the rods" ... "Reaction, full speed backwards," I said to myself as we made our way back to the Corps.' A few days later the Tsar questioned Kropotkin about his decision to go to the Amur. The latter explained his wish to work where there would be so much to do to apply the great reforms which were going to be made: 'He [the Tsar] looked straight at me; he became pensive; at last he said, "Well, go; one can be useful everywhere," and his face took on such an expression of fatigue, such a character of complete surrender, that I thought at once, "He is a used-up man, he is going to give it all up." '[2] Alexander II, for his part, must at the least have been disquieted by this young and promising officer who enthused so disconcertingly about reform and turned his back on the court.

Kropotkin's disillusionment over the possibilities of reform under the Tsarist régime, however, did not lead him to an active involvement in the revolutionary movement until 1872, and Alexander II did not discover the measure of his erstwhile page's alienation and disloyalty until 1874 when Kropotkin was betrayed into the hands of the police. Needless to say, the Tsar, who by this time had retreated unequivocally into a policy of reaction and repression, did not hesitate to implement the threat he had made in 1862 and Kropotkin was promptly incarcerated in a damp and isolated cell in the fortress of St Peter and St Paul. Alexander II, no less than Kropotkin, recognised the danger of the disaffection of a member of the aristocracy with such close associations with the court.

But for all the importance of Kropotkin's disaffection and the drama of its discovery by the authorities it is clear that the process whereby his abhorrence of the oppressive social system was transformed into a commitment to bakuninism was a long and gradual one – a fact highlighted, perhaps unwittingly, in the cryptic conversation he had with the Tsar's brother who visited him in his cell. The Grand Duke wanted to know when and where he had got his revolutionary ideas. 'It was always the same,' Kropotkin declared in an effort to be both evasive and truthful. 'Why!' exclaimed his distinguished visitor in terror, 'Were you such in the Corps of Pages?' 'In the Corps I was a boy, and what is indefinite in boyhood grows definite in manhood,' was the cool reply.[3] Kropotkin was actually already thirty years old when he established contact with the International and began his career as a revolutionist. It was only in 1867, when he left Siberia, he tells us, that he was ready to become an anarchist.[4] Moreover, for all his preoccupation with the desperate need for radical change, we find him, as late as

June 1866, cautioning his brother against an impassioned commitment to revolution without careful reflection as to the likely benefits or harm for the majority.[5] For Kropotkin it was essential to seek out a rational and effective way whereby the prevailing oppressive system could be transformed, and a meaningful role for himself identified in effecting that transformation. He was not prepared to base his life and actions simply on a gut reaction of hatred for the régime combined with a theoretical study of radical literature. He had to explore all the possibilities systematically, for if one essential feature of his character was his passionate concern for the oppressed, the other was his preoccupation with rational reflection based on scientific investigation and enquiry. It therefore took him some time to arrive at a revolutionary position. But for all that, and no doubt because of it, Kropotkin, once he had arrived at his convictions about society and revolution, did not lightly accept any modification of them. James Guillaume, on one occasion exasperated by Kropotkin's response to criticism of his ideas about the French Revolution, exclaimed: 'You defend yourself like the very devil down to the last cartridge!'[6]

Kropotkin's passionate concern for the oppressed originated in the experiences of his childhood – experiences which by the time he was twelve had instilled in him such anxiety about his aristocratic position that he ceased to use the title of prince and adopted the plain signature P. Kropotkin for everything he wrote.

In the old noble families of Russia, children were for the most part abandoned to the care of nurses and tutors or sent away to schools from where home visits were very severely restricted: relations between parents and children tended to be stiff and formal at the best of times. The younger Kropotkin children, Peter and Alexander, whose mother died when they were very young (the two other children were much older and already away at school), would have had a particularly loveless childhood had it not been for the care and attention lavished on them by the household serfs; their stepmother whom their father, Prince Alexei, married soon after the death of his first wife, displayed a gross insensitivity in her behaviour towards them. Not content with moving the family into a new home from which everything that reminded them of their mother had been removed, she also wrenched them from the care of their mother's servants and cut off all associations with their maternal relatives. The family serfs however, who had found the Prince's first wife an altogether more sympathetic personality, in devotion to her memory, now transferred their affection to her

children. 'I do not know what would have become of us,' Kropotkin declared, 'if we had not found in our house, among the serf servants, that atmosphere of love which children must have around them.'[7] In such circumstances, the children inevitably tended to sympathise with the plight of the serfs – all the more so as the treatment of the latter represented an extension of the oppressive authority exercised by the Prince over the family itself. Alexander, for instance, even suffered a beating from his father when he was twenty-one.

Peter was profoundly distressed by what the serfs endured at the hands of his father – forced marriages, young men handed over to the dreaded army recruiting board for having occasioned princely displeasure by some act of insubordination, beatings inflicted for some minor misdemeanour. Yet Alexei Kropotkin was regarded as a good master by his serfs: what happened in the Kropotkin home was, as the Prince himself declared, nothing worth speaking of in comparison to what went on in other aristocratic households. And all this, Peter began to see as he grew up, served only to maintain the useless and often decadent existence of a class excluded by the tsars from any constructive role in the running of the country. All members of the aristocracy were virtually obliged to pursue a military career where the obsession was with appearance, tradition, style – nobody was a more dedicated soldier than Alexei Kropotkin in this sense, but his only claim to military distinction was a medal awarded him in consequence of the bravery of his personal serf.

Kropotkin's growing alienation from his class and distaste for the social system was reinforced by his experiences as a student at the Corps of Pages. In this exclusive institution, the education provided was in many respects remarkably progressive for the time (Kropotkin praised the way in which 'the teaching was rendered as concrete as possible'), but a tradition of bullying the younger boys by the senior students still prevailed when he first arrived, which was only exceeded in its brutality by the military discipline itself: in 1861 he found himself imprisoned in an unlighted room and fed on bread and water for several weeks for daring to criticise the behaviour of the officer in charge.

Finding little in common with his fellow students, Kropotkin, encouraged and stimulated by correspondence with his brother, devoted his time outside the classroom to the study of the problems that exercised the major thinkers and writers of the day. This led him to undertake his first project of scientific enquiry, a survey of the village

fair at Nikolskoye where the family had their country estate, an exercise which he declares, 'brought me one step nearer to our peasants, making me see them under a new light' and left on him a lasting impression of their 'serious good sense and sound judgement'.[8] Visits to the homes of fashionable relatives with an interest in liberal ideas enabled him, in spite of the vigorous censorship, to make the acquaintance of the writings of Herzen. And so impressed was he by what he read that he tried to start a secret revolutionary paper in the Corps – a dangerous venture which he only abandoned at the insistence of the very few sympathetic pages who had read the first copies. His views nonetheless remained very much those of a constitutionalist. 'It was not necessary [for the Tsar] totally to renounce his power, only to limit it,' he declared in a letter to Alexander in 1858.[9] Moreover, because of the restricted social milieu in which he lived he had no contact whatsoever with the radical movement of the day.

When Kropotkin became the Tsar's personal page in June 1861 he still expected, as indeed did the liberals including even Herzen himself, that Alexander II as the liberator of the serfs would initiate reforms to eliminate the evils of the old order and limit the power of autocratic government.[10] But the Tsar's behaviour, beginning with the savage repression of student disturbances in the autumn of that year, forced him to recognise the fragility of the royal commitment to liberal ideas. By the end of his year as page to Alexander II he had become convinced that the latter was basically a despotic and vacillating character, who, surrounded as he was by a corrupt court and advisers who terrified him with suggestions that any radical change would produce a bloody uprising of the peasants, lacked the moral will to carry through a real programme of reform.

During adolescence, Kropotkin's anxiety about his aristocratic position had crystallised into a preoccupation with the need to be a useful member of society – so much so that his brother Alexander complained: 'You speak of this future life for society as about a debt.'[11] He now had to face the dilemma of whether or not this was possible under the tsarist régime. Parental opposition had already virtually obliged him to abandon an initial plan of going to university in order to acquire what he regarded as a necessary basic education. Clearly he came to the conclusion that he could be useful to society as an officer in military service without further education and that even now there remained some hope of reform, for he chose a posting in the recently annexed Amur region of Siberia in the belief that something could still be done

in developing this area away from the immediate influence of the court. Questioned on his arrival (September 1862) about the reasons for his posting he insisted he had chosen to come out of 'the desire to be useful, to find activity; the impossibility of going to the university'.[12]

Kropotkin, very much encouraged by the liberal views and sympathies he found amongst some of the leading administrators of the region, particularly the military governor of Eastern Siberia, General Kukel to whose staff he was assigned, applied himself with vigour and enthusiasm to work as secretary to committees concerned with developing proposals for prison and local government reform. But within a year Kukel had been dismissed for collusion in the escape of Bakunin and for his sympathetic treatment of Mikhailov, whilst the government in St Petersburg now began to put a halt to any further development of proposals for reform. 'The departure of Kukel, the consequences of which I wrote to you, has upset everything,' he wrote in a disconsolate letter to his brother in March 1863, adding on a note of desperation, 'I definitely do not know where I must take refuge now; probably I'll go with the barge.'[13] And in the summer he obtained permission to lead a string of provision barges to remote towns along the Amur river. The barges were wrecked in a storm, but with characteristic energy and determination Kropotkin hastened to St Petersburg to report the loss, and, after considerable persistence managed to convince the authorities of the necessity of providing tugs to avert future disasters to the supply barges.

With efforts at reform frustrated he now tried to do what seemed possible in the existing circumstances, but soon became convinced of the utter futility of such efforts. He prepared for example, a report on the economic condition of the Usuri Cossacks which actually earned him promotion, only to find the funds to implement his recommendation being misappropriated by the official responsible for their administration. Similarly in the autumn of 1865 he discovered that the money for the ships to tow the barges had been used to pay for the construction of useless buildings for officials.

Meanwhile he had been chosen to head a geographical expedition to explore Manchuria in the early summer of 1864. This expedition was followed by others. From now on he devoted his energy increasingly to scientific exploration, achieving distinction as a geographer. Nevertheless, he was gradually drawn to the irresistible conclusion that service in Siberia was no longer either beneficial or useful. One of his most notable achievements was the discovery in 1866 of the overland route

providing a more direct link than that afforded by the Lena river between Chita in Eastern Siberia and the Lena goldfields in the North – yet the triumph of that discovery was fatally marred by the horror he felt in witnessing the atrocious working conditions of the salt workers at Lena. 'This is where one can gaze every day to one's heart's content upon the enslavement of the worker by capital, and at the manifestation of the great law of the reduction in reward with the increase in work,' he wrote to his brother.[14] And, taking his inspiration from Proudhon, he declared that the present system had to be undermined by the direct road of aid associations, adding that only then would a revolution bring great benefit. That same year he attended the grim hearings of the military court which condemned five Poles to death for their part in a pathetic escape attempt by some fifty Polish exiles, who, armed with sticks and half a dozen rifles, revolted against their employment on the building of a road to connect Irkutsk with Chita – a task which had involved blasting a way along the most vertical cliffs of the side of Lake Baikal. Peter had been away on the Lena expedition at the time of this revolt, but his brother Alexander, who had joined him at Irkutsk in 1864, narrowly missed being sent with the troops against the Poles. This finally convinced the brothers of the necessity of leaving military service as soon as possible: 'For my brother and myself this insurrection was a great lesson. We realised what it meant to belong in any way to the army . . . We decided to leave the military service and return to Russia.'[15]

Kropotkin left Siberia in April 1867 totally alienated from the system and with any illusions he might have had about the possibilities of changing it, completely destroyed. He had witnessed the full extent of human misery generated by the Russian autocracy which dispatched an endless stream of political exiles and social rejects to Siberia where, even outside prisons, they endured the brutal excesses of a sort of primitive capitalism. At the same time he had discovered, he tells us, the absolute impossibility of doing anything really useful for the mass of the people by means of the administrative machinery where, even with senior administrators who were well-intentioned and enlightened, all progressive measures had been paralysed by a pyramidal, centralised administration which focussed on its own interests instead of the good of the country. On the other hand, however, his experiences, particularly as an explorer, had inspired him with more positive and indeed revolutionary ideas about society. As a consequence of having to cope with the problems of dealing with hundreds of men in organising dif-

ficult and dangerous expeditions he had come to appreciate the value of acting on the principle of common understanding instead of military discipline: 'I soon understood that in serious work commanding and discipline are of little avail. Men of initiative are required everywhere; but once the impulse has been given, the enterprise must be conducted, especially in Russia, not in a military fashion, but in a sort of communal way, by means of common understanding.' Observations of the social organisation of the village communities he had encountered during his expeditions had convinced him of the great social creativity and historical importance of the masses. 'The constructive work of the unknown masses, which so seldom finds any mention in the growth in the forms of society fully appeared before my eyes.' On the one hand, he had observed how the Dukhobors with their semi-communistic brotherly organisation had succeeded in colonising the Amur region where state projects had failed; on the other, he had seen how remote native communities had elaborated complex forms of social organisation far away from the influence of civilisation. All of this lead him to adopt ideas about leaders and the masses similar to those expressed by Tolstoy in *War and Peace* and, having lost whatever faith he had ever had in state discipline, he was now, he tells us, ready to become an anarchist although he had not yet formulated his observations into any specific political theory.[16]

Once in St Petersburg Kropotkin entered the University to secure at last a thorough training in mathematics which he regarded as so essential to the furtherance of his studies. This, with his geographical work, absorbed all his time for the next five years. During this period he carried out the meticulous research which resulted in his discovery of the configuration of the mountains of Asia – a discovery which he regarded as his most significant contribution to science and which occasioned him immense excitement and satisfaction: 'There are not many joys in human life equal to the joy of the sudden birth of a generalisation, illuminating the mind after a long period of patient research . . . He who has once in his life experienced this joy of scientific creation will never forget it'.[17] But such pleasure in his geographical work served only to intensify his ever present sense of guilt: 'But what right had I to these highest joys, when all around me was nothing but misery and struggle for a mouldy bit of bread; when whatsoever I should spend to enable me to live in the world of higher emotions must needs be taken from the very mouths of those who grew the wheat and had not enough for their children?' Hoping somehow to resolve the

conflict between his commitment as a distinguished geographer and his concern to help the people, he conceived the idea of writing a comprehensive physical geography of Russia which would provide basic information about the best way of cultivating the land. But what was the point, he asked himself, of providing this information when it could be of little practical use to the peasant until the whole social and economic system was changed. 'How dare I talk to him of American machines, when all that he can raise must be sold to pay rents and taxes? He needs me to live with him, to help him to become the owner or the free occupier of that land. Then he will read books with profit, but not now'.[18] In the autumn of 1871 he therefore refused the offer of the coveted secretaryship of the Russian Geographical Society which would have provided him with the opportunity and resources to write the physical geography of Russia.

Two events at this time were important factors both in Kropotkin's decision to devote himself to the cause of the people and to his subsequent action in making contact with the IWA in Switzerland in 1872. One was the Paris Commune, the other was the death of his father in the autumn of 1871. The news of the Paris Commune generated in Kropotkin a new hope and excitement about the workers' movement in Western Europe.[19] The brave struggle of the communards, in spite of its tragic consequences, contrasted starkly with the situation in St Petersburg where the oppressed continued to endure their misery passively and the liberals of the sixties, if they were not already in prison, were now too afraid to say anything in the face of the engulfing tide of reaction. Kropotkin's concern for the proletariat in Western Europe had been aroused as early as 1861 by reading an exposition of Engels' book *The Condition of the Working Class in England* by Shelgunov. Since then he had read whatever articles he could find in the Russian press about the IWA. What he could find out from the biased and censored newspapers in Russia about either the IWA or the Paris Commune however failed to satisfy him. Consequently when Sofia Nikolaevna Lavrova (the sister of his brother's wife who had close associations with the ex-communards and the International in Zurich), returned for a brief visit to St Petersburg in the early autumn of 1871, he made a special point of meeting her.[20] The death of his father at this time meant that he could now afford to realise what seems to have been a cherished ambition to go to Western Europe to find out for himself about the developments there. In the early spring of 1872 he departed for Zurich. Through his sister-in-law he joined one of the local sections

of the International and set about reading everything he could about the IWA: 'I spent days and nights in reading, and received a deep impression which nothing will efface.'[21] But his friends found difficulty in satisfying his demands for information and suggested he should visit groups in the Jura and Geneva, the main centres of the International.

In Geneva he met the local leaders, Nikolai Utin and Olga Levashova who introduced him to leading members of the sections of the different trades and even invited him to be present at the committee meetings. But he preferred to be with the workers themselves so that he could get a real inside understanding of the movement. 'Taking a glass of sour wine at one of the tables in the hall, I used to sit there every evening amid the workers, and soon became friendly with several of them . . . I could thus follow the movement from the inside, and know the workers' view of it.' He was deeply impressed by the workers' enthusiasm for the International: 'One must have lived among the workers of the time to realise the effect which the sudden growth of the Association had upon their minds – the trust they put in it, the love with which they spoke it, the sacrifices they made for it.'[22] And seeing in this a standing reproach to all those who had the education and leisure yet hesitated to give their much needed help to the workers in their efforts to build up the IWA, he became convinced that he had no alternative but to cast in his lot with them – to become a revolutionist.

Unfortunately, Kropotkin soon had serious doubts about the sort of help the masses were getting in Geneva from the leadership of someone like Utin,[23] involving as it did the political machinations associated with the pursuit of parliamentary ambitions. Declaring that he could not reconcile such wire-pulling by the leaders with the burning speeches he had heard them pronounce from the platform, he left after a few weeks to seek out the bakuninists in the Jura.

The encounter with these Jurassians had a profound effect on Kropotkin. Here in the Jura Federation which he tells us had generated the 'first spark of anarchism' in its opposition to the authoritarian behaviour of the General Council of the IWA, where the workers thought things out for themselves and, if they took their inspiration from Bakunin, did so without regarding his words as some sort of incontrovertible law, here he finally felt at home.

The theoretical aspects of anarchism, as they were beginning to be expressed in the Jura Federation, especially by Bakunin; the criticisms of state socialism – the fear of an economic despotism, far more dangerous than the merely political despotism – which I had heard formulated there; and the revolutionary character of the

agitation, appealed strongly to my mind. But the egalitarian relations which I found in the Jura Mountains, the independence of thought and expression which I saw developing among the workers, and their unlimited devotion to the cause appealed strongly to my feelings; and when I came away from the mountains, after a week's stay with the watchmakers, my views on socialism were settled. I was an anarchist.[24]

Such was Kropotkin's account of his experience in the Jura, particularly the week he spent at Sonvilier, and his commitment to bakuninism – a commitment reinforced by a visit to the bakuninists at Verviers in Belgium where he discovered amongst the cloth workers 'one of the most sympathetic populations that I have ever met with in Western Europe'.[25] For some reason, however, although he established close relations with leading militants such as Adhemar Schwitzguébel and James Guillaume, he never actually met Bakunin himself. Guillaume apparently advised against such a visit ostensibly because of Bakunin's age and his overwrought condition as a result of the quarrel in the International. However he later told Nettlau that Bakunin himself did not want a meeting because he connected Kropotkin with the moderate views of his brother who was associated with Peter Lavrov and had been offended by his stay with Utin in Geneva. In point of fact Guillaume was finding Bakunin's behaviour with regard to the Jura Federation rather trying at this time – a circumstance about which he was always rather evasive – and may well have had misgivings about the consequences of such a meeting.[26]

Meanwhile, in spite of his enthusiasm Kropotkin admits that there remained one point about which he had doubts and only accepted after having 'given it a great deal of thinking and many hours of my nights' – and that point concerned the revolution itself. If having abandoned his earlier faith in liberal ideas he now recognised that revolution might be the only way of securing the liberation of the oppressed he continued, as Proudhon had done, to doubt the efficacy of such a revolution. He had been horrified by accounts of the terrible atrocities committed against the communards by the Versailles army. Given the strength of the middle classes backed up by the powerful machinery of the modern state, he was fearful of the destructive violence that might be engendered by the sort of revolution ('a revolution far more profound than any of the revolutions which history had on record') which would be required to deliver everything into the hands of the people. Revolutions, he observed, only took place where there was already some disaffection amongst the privileged classes and were in any case

an inevitable part of the evolutionary process: 'there are periods in human development when a conflict is unavoidable, and the civil war breaks out quite independently of the will of particular individuals.' There was only one way of doing this, he concluded. The oppressed, in contrast with the unfortunate communards, must have a clear idea of what they wanted and how to achieve it so that the struggle would be focussed from the beginning on primary rather than secondary issues. With a higher and clearer vision inspiring the conflict, thereby winning the sympathy even of some of the class opposed to change, the force of social creativity would be more important than that of military strength; at the same time without fighting over matters of secondary importance to give free play to men's lower instincts the struggle would claim fewer victims on both sides.[27]

Committed now to anti-authoritarian socialism and popular revolution, Kropotkin proposed to settle in the Jura to devote himself to the socialist cause. Guillaume, however, persuaded him that he should return home to help the people in his own country, pointing out that he was much more urgently needed there where helpers were so few and he understood so much better the needs of the oppressed and how to communicate with them.[28] In May 1872, therefore, Kropotkin returned to Russia to take part in the revolutionary movement and Guillaume received no further news of him until the newspapers reported his arrest and imprisonment in the spring of 1874. He only re-established contact with the International through correspondence with Guillaume after his escape from Russia in the summer of 1876. And his active involvement in the movement only really began with his arrival in Switzerland to settle at La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1877.

By then the Anti-authoritarian International had emerged and conflicts within it were already leading anti-statists to define their position in opposition to other socialists.

The Anti-authoritarian International: statist/anti-statist polarisation

At the time of Kropotkin's visit to the Jura the IWA was in the grip of the Marx–Bakunin quarrel. The Jura Federation, which had emerged from a split in the Fédération Romande in January 1869, had failed to secure recognition from the Marx-dominated General Council, in spite of being the majority faction, because of its close association with

Bakunin. Formally inaugurated at the Congress of Sonvilier in 1871, it had adopted a firm anti-statist position from the start and with the issue of the Sonvilier Circular had taken the initiative in attacking the General Council. The Circular condemned the convocation of the unrepresentative Council of London which had accorded extra authority to the General Council and committed the IWA to the struggle for political power; at the same time it accused the General Council of trying to replace the free federation of autonomous sections of the International with a hierarchical authoritarian organisation under its own control.[29]

In September 1872, shortly after Kropotkin's return to Russia, the Jura Federation called together a Congress of the dissident federations and sections of St-Imier – a Congress which could be said to mark the beginning of the Anti-authoritarian International even though the latter was not formally established until the Congress of Geneva in 1873. The participants, representatives of the Spanish, Italian and Jura Federations as well as the French and American sections who were bakuninist in their sympathies, denounced the General Council; reiterating and enlarging upon the points made in the Sonvilier Circular, they argued that its activities had shown it to be a threat to the autonomy and independence of the sections and federations – to the very liberty which constituted the first condition of the emancipation of the workers. Indeed they went to far as to assert that the General Council by its very nature had inevitably become a violation of that liberty which was the fundamental basis of the IWA. They therefore agreed on a Pact of Solidarity to preserve both the liberty of the sections and federations and the unity of the International against the General Council. And not content simply to condemn the authoritarian behaviour of the latter they went on to denounce the preoccupation with political power it represented. They insisted that a uniform policy of action for social emancipation could and should not be imposed on the proletariat; only the free spontaneous action of the masses themselves could liberate society from class oppression, and that action, they claimed, would be directed towards the creation of a free economic federation based on the work and equality of all, and independent of political government which only sustained class oppression. The first duty of the working class was the destruction of all political power without recourse to revolutionary or provisional government which was more dangerous than any existing government; proletarians of all countries, eschewing any compromise to accomplish social revol-

ution, had to establish working-class solidarity in revolutionary action outside bourgeois politics.[30]

In spite of the clearly anti-statist implications of these resolutions, the St-Imier declaration gathered broad support among members of the IWA, for the tactics adopted by the General Council in order to discredit and defeat Bakunin and his sympathisers, both at the Conference of London in 1871 and the Congress of the Hague in 1872, had aroused widespread hostility. The Anti-authoritarian Congress at Geneva in 1873, therefore, included participants from the Dutch, Belgian and English Federations drawn into an alliance with the bakuninists by commitment to the autonomy and independence of the sections and federations as a basic principle of the International.[31] In 1874 even the Germans sent representatives to the Congress of Brussels. The alliance between bakuninists and the other internationalists was, however, an uneasy one, for the division between statists and anti-statists remained. The letter of support from the English Federation made this clear from the outset. It declared that the latter disagreed with the Jura Federation on the question of action, but, according primacy to the federal principle in the IWA, they were prepared to cooperate with the bakuninists on the clear understanding that this meant they continued to follow quite different methods of struggle.[32]

It would of course be a mistake to exaggerate the degree of polarisation at this point. The bakuninists had not adopted the uncompromising position that was to characterise the anarchist position later on. Bakunin himself in 1870 had conceded that the representative system could work at the commune level and in 1871 had even suggested the possibility of cooperating with the political parties in Spain.[33] On the other side, De Paepe of Belgium, even though he warned that the lack of general direction in an anarchist revolution might allow it to be taken over and diverted from the objective of workers' emancipation, was prepared to concede that the anti-statist approach might seem to be more obviously appropriate to somewhere like Spain where the state had been reduced to chaos.[34] But the tension between the statists and anti-statists undoubtedly persisted and the division between them sharpened in the debates of the Anti-authoritarian International. Even the discussion about creating some form of general committee at the first Congress at Geneva in 1873 was punctuated by sharp exchanges between Brousse and Hales (one of the English delegates) about

anarchy, in spite of Guillaume's efforts to steer discussion away from contentious theoretical issues.[35]

The disagreements manifested themselves very clearly at the Congress of Brussels in 1874 in debates about political action and the organisation of a socialist society.[36] As regards the latter, the disagreement came to a head over De Paepe's proposals for a federative state to run public services with political functions being handed over to the communes. De Paepe seems to have felt he was putting forward something that struck a balance between the notion of the Workers' State of the English and Germans, and that of an-archy advocated by the bakuninists.[37] But in fact the bakuninists argued that the Belgian proposals would lead to a reconstitution of the state, and insisted on the necessity of creating a free federation of communes based not on law but on free agreement. On the other side the German delegates stuck firmly to their commitment to the Workers' State, whilst the English, somewhat adrift in all this talk of revolution, dismissed the whole discussion with a reiteration of their immediate concern with agitation to reduce working hours so that the workers could learn to understand social questions!

There were equally divisive discussions about political action even though all were agreed that each country should follow its own policy of action. The Germans, with the avowed aim of transforming the bourgeois state into a socialist one, declared that they needed a strong centralised organisation to combat the powerful centralised German state and, whilst recognising that they could not achieve their aim without violence, maintained they had no alternative but to use legal methods of action and propaganda to avoid suppression in the present situation. On their side however, the Belgians argued that there was no question of them adopting political action since they did not have the vote and had no intention of agitating for it because they knew they could get nothing from parliaments. The Jurassians also argued for the abstentionist position, maintaining that experience had demonstrated to them the uselessness of parliamentary politics and led them to organise outside and in opposition to bourgeois parties in parliament.[38] Farga, the Spanish delegate, took a perhaps even more uncompromising anti-statist position. He argued that the situation was so revolutionary in Spain that the workers had to concentrate on revolutionary, not political action. And warning that a similar situation was developing in Italy and France and would develop as a result of govern-

mental persecution in Germany, he insisted that the workers must concern themselves with revolutionary not political action.

The tension and divisions revealed in these debates underlined the fragility of the Anti-authoritarian International, and by the time of the next congress at Berne in 1876, it was clear that the earlier semblance of unity had been seriously undermined.[39] Increasing polarisation between the statist and anti-statist positions had manifested itself in disunity within the federations themselves. In Switzerland, the Jurassians at the Congress of Olten in June 1873 had failed to reach any sort of agreement about organisation with the German-speaking socialists whose approach remained essentially parliamentary and reformist.[40] In Belgium there was hostility between the anti-statists of French-speaking Wallonia and the Flemish sections who now favoured the approach of the social democrats.[41] But it was not just a question of discord within the federations. Some support had melted away – the English Federation did not send a delegate to the Congress of 1876.[42] And in fact the Congress of Berne was dominated by the anti-statists, including as it did only De Paepe for the Belgians and eighteen delegates for the Jurassians.

De Paepe, however, did come along with a conciliatory proposal from the Belgian Federation to the effect that a Universal Socialist Congress should be called to bring together all socialists to discuss a closer association between them: 'The object of the conference would be to cement as firm an understanding as possible between the different socialist organisations and to discuss questions of general interest for the emancipation of the proletariat.'[43] The statists, indeed, did not want to sever relations with the Anti-authoritarian International, and both the German Swiss of the Schweizerischer Arbeiterbund and the German Socialist Party sent representatives to Berne. Quite clearly the former did not come in an altogether conciliatory mood, for one of the representatives, Greulich, began his report to the Congress with the declaration: 'The International is dead!'[44] The German representative, Vahlteich, a socialist deputy in the Reichstag, however, adopted an unequivocably conciliatory stand. The German Socialist Party had no sympathy for the bakuninist position, but with the recent healing of the rift between eisenachers and lassalleans at Gotha in the face of increasing persecution, it was concerned to re-establish links of solidarity between socialist movements, and obviously at this stage the last thing German socialists wanted was to exacerbate divisions in the International, particularly after the demise of the authoritarian

section.[45] Vahlteich came to Berne, therefore, expressly to affirm the internal unity of the German socialist movement and to establish links of solidarity between it and the members of the Anti-authoritarian International, even going so far as to call upon the Swiss socialists to reach some sort of tolerant understanding with each other. He kept aloof from discussion of the controversial issue of relationships between individuals and groups in the reorganised society, leaving Franz, one of the Swiss German delegates without support in presenting the pure statist argument. Guillaume, for his part, bent over backwards to smooth over tensions by suggesting that differences on tactics between statists and anti-statists related to the different situations facing socialists in each region, even though he went on to reject the idea of the *Volkstaat* in discussion relating to the society of the future.

All but one of the delegates finally agreed to the Belgian proposal for a Universal Socialist Congress at Ghent in 1877 with a proviso from the Italian delegation that this should involve no move to replace the International by a new organisation.[46] But in the midst of all these efforts at conciliation, Malatesta had given a blunt no-nonsense speech about the fundamental divergence of view between the statists and anti-statists: insisting that rapprochement between the two sides did not mean any compromise of principles for the Italians, he had reiterated their complete rejection of the statist position in any form, whether it involved the *Volkstaat* of the German social democrats or the decentralised *Etat désarmé* of De Paepe and the Belgian moderates:

> Anarchy, the struggle against all authority, against maintaining or establishing any constituted power, still remains the banner around which the whole of revolutionary Italy rallies.
>
> I shall not follow some of the preceding speakers in their philological digressions. For us, the state is the organisation of authority, it is a power, which, whatever its origins, exists outside the people and is therefore necessarily against the people; it is any organisation whatever which does not arise spontaneously, naturally, progressively from within society itself but is imposed on it from above. For us, the state does not depend on the geographical extension of a given social organism but on its essence; we believe a state can also exist within a commune or association.
>
> Our aim is to destroy the state.[47]

Such a speech must have left little doubt in anyone's mind about the widening gulf between the two sides. There were no statists of any sort at the final Congress of the Anti-authoritarian International at Verviers in 1877.[48] As for the Universal Socialist Congress at Ghent, in spite of the high hopes engendered amongst the Belgian workers, it failed to

re-establish unity in the socialist movement. From the beginning, the delegates divided into two hostile camps on questions concerning principles and the proceedings ended with the social democrats holding a secret meeting to work out a declaration of solidarity which excluded the anti-statists.[49]

Meanwhile, as the unity of the Anti-authoritarian International collapsed in the face of the polarisation between the views of the bakuninists and the social democrats, the state socialist movements, whose position and indeed credibility had been undermined by the repression that followed the defeat of the Paris Commune, had begun to revive. In Germany, the newly unified party which emerged from the Congress of Gotha in 1875 was able to survive repression, and in spite of the anti-socialist laws which Bismarck was able to initiate as a result of attempts on the life of the Kaiser in 1878, the Social Democratic Party, availing itself of freedom of election to the Reichstag, continued to develop on legal political lines – repression in the long run served only to strengthen centralised party organisation and belief in the necessity of capturing control of the state machine to effect social change. In the recently developed movements of the Low Countries, De Paepe's moderate position prevailed, and the Belgians drew closer to the social democrats in spite of persistent criticism and opposition from the anti-statists of Wallonia, particularly in the Verviers area. In France the first workers' congress was held openly in Paris, but the group which rapidly gained ascendency in the reviving movement was the one led by Guesde which was committed to a more marxist approach. In Italy, where the bakuninists were suffering the effects of persecution, the Lombard Federation was founded in 1876 – a development which, according to one historian, 'marked the beginning of a fairly coherent revisionist movement on Italian soil,'[50] for although not committed to the marxist view of the primacy of political action, it did reject insurrectionary tactics.

The state socialists were in a stronger position by the second half of the seventies than they had been at the time of the original schism in the International 1872–73. Certainly, they seem to have dominated the proceedings at Ghent.[51] Leading social democrats were in fact quite pleased with the Universal Socialist Congress in spite of the lack of achievement, because they felt state socialists had been able to counteract the influence of the anti-statists. Liebknecht assured Engels that the Congress had gone better than expected in spite of the anarchists, 'the babblers of nonsense', whilst Marx wrote to Sorge: 'The Congress of

Ghent, by the way, although it leaves so much to be desired, at least has had the virtue that Guillaume and Co have been totally abandoned by their former camp followers.'[52]

It was, therefore, in opposition to the increasing influence of the state socialists, whether marxist-inspired social democrats or parliamentary socialists, that the anti-statists now began to define and develop both their theoretical position and practical policy of action.

2

Anarchist communism

The origin of anarchist communist ideas

In 1868, Bakunin in defining his anti-statist position had declared himself to be a collectivist.

> I am not a communist because communism concentrates and absorbs all the powers of society into the state, because it necessarily ends in the centralisation of property in the hands of the state when I for my part want the abolition of the state . . . I want society and collective property to be organised from the bottom upwards by means of free association and not from the top downwards by means of some sort of authority . . . it is in this sense that I am a collectivist.[1]

At this stage, according to Kropotkin, the term 'collectivist' was preferred to that of 'anarchist' because anarchy was associated with the economic ideas of the proudhonians: 'The word an-archy (this was how it was then written) seemed to associate the party too closely with the proudhonians, whose ideas of economic reform the International was at that moment combatting.'[2] But all those who finally disassociated themselves from the authoritarianism of the sympathisers of Marx and called themselves collectivists were not anti-statists. And during the arguments that developed in the Anti-authoritarian International the latter came to be identified as anarchists.

At first the word 'anarchy' was used by the statists as a term of abuse to discredit the anti-statists. In *Les prétendues scissions de L'Internationale* (March 1872) Marx accused the bakuninists of wanting to destroy the International in order to replace it with anarchy.[3] Hales, the English delegate at the Congress of Geneva in 1873, actually argued that the bakuninists were advocates of anarchy which was incompatible with collectivism. 'I oppose anarchy because this word and what it represents are synonymous with dissolution. Anarchy signifies individualism, and individualism is the basis of the present social sys-

tem that we want to overthrow. Anarchy is incompatible with collectivism.'[4] Brousse (France) and Viñas (Spain) countered this by protesting that Hales had misrepresented the meaning of the word anarchy by identifying it with individualism and disorder – anarchy, in fact, they claimed, meant the negation of authority and there was nothing in this that conflicted with collectivism. Experience in combatting authoritarianism in the International had actually demonstrated the advantages of anarchic organisation. At this point the bakuninists were still perhaps anxious to avoid being described as anarchists, although it is clear they were more concerned to denounce Hales's interpretation of the meaning of the word anarchy than to reject its application to their own proposals that there should be no centralising authority of any sort in the International.

The argument about anarchy was re-enacted at the Congress of Brussels in 1874, but this time the term was used more intelligently to indicate the difference between the statist and anti-statist views which emerged from the debate over De Paepe's proposals concerning the organisation of public services. It is significant that at this time efforts were made to focus attention on the true meaning of the word anarchy by writing it in a hyphenated form (an-archy), to underline the Greek derivation meaning 'without government', in opposition to the notion of disorder with which anarchy was usually associated.[5] And, understood in its anti-authoritarian sense, the bakuninists accepted the word anarchy as a term to describe their position with regard to the state. Schwitzguébel declared, 'It is now clear that the issue lies between the workers' state and an-archy. Gomez actually made a firm statement in favour of anarchy on behalf of the Spanish Federation: 'The Spanish anarchists in general and a long time ago declared for anarchy in such a way that they were opposed to any reorganisation of public services leading to the reconstitution of the state.'[6]

At the Congress of Berne in 1876, although Guillaume was still complaining about the use of the term anarchist as an excuse to denounce the anti-statists as the apostles of disorder and chaos, Malatesta declared: 'Anarchy, the struggle against all authority, against all power constituted or to be constituted, always remains the banner around which the whole of revolutionary Italy rallies.'[7]

Clearly, Spanish and Italian bakuninists had no reservations about an-archy even though, if we are to believe Guillaume, some distaste for the word persisted in the Jura. As well as protesting at the Congress, Guillaume, commenting on a letter of Malon (18 March 1876) which

had criticised 'certain anarchists', namely the Spanish and Jurassian anti-statists, for their 'anarchist programme', had insisted in May 1876 that the Jurassians and many of their friends still avoided the terms 'anarchy' and 'anarchist'; he had also declared that there was no anarchist programme:

The words *anarchy* and *anarchists* are, in our eyes and in those of many of our friends, terms that should no longer be used because they only express a negative idea without indicating any positive theory, and lend themselves to unfortunate misunderstandings. To my knowledge, no anarchist programme has ever been formulated.[8]

In his history of the International, Guillaume in fact claimed that the first indication of the adoption of the term anarchist by the Jurassians was in an article in the *Bulletin* on 29 April 1877.

This is the first time I think that the *Bulletin* itself took up again the term anarchist which had been applied to us by the hostile press to identify the members of the International opposed to electoral and parliamentary politics. It did not frighten us but we habitually put it in italics to show that it was not our usual language.[9]

In March, however, the *Bulletin* had published a speech given at St-Imier by Elisée Reclus, which, as Fleming has pointed out, was one of the first clear expositions and statements of anarchy as the socialist ideal.[10] The fact that the adoption by the Jurassians of the terms *anarchy* and *anarchist* followed closely upon this speech does suggest some connection between the two events. It may be that Reclus had argued away any reservations the Jurassians may still have had about anarchy, or it could be that he had simply given clear and eloquent expression to conclusions they had already arrived at themselves. Be that as it may, it seems that by the spring of 1877 the bakuninists called themselves anarchists and recognised the term *anarchy* as an accurate representation of their commitment to the overthrow of the state and its replacement by a free federation of autonomous communes.

The Jurassians, according to Guillaume, actually declared for an anarchist collectivist programme for the first time at their annual congress of 1877 at St-Imier. His account of the proceedings of the Congress in the *Bulletin* concluded with the enthusiastic declaration: 'At the Congress of St-Imier all the points the anarchist and collectivist programme were fully expounded in public for the first time.'[11] Strangely enough the term anarchist collectivist does not actually appear elsewhere in Guillaume's account of the Congress. Nevertheless, the Congress declaration with regard to the approach of the Jura

Federation to the Universal Socialist Congress at Ghent certainly does contain a clear, unequivocal statement of the anti-parliamentary position.[12] In 1878 at the annual Congress at Fribourg the Jurassians declared that there was a need for a publication to give a comprehensive exposition of the theoretical and practical programme of anarchist, collectivist and revolutionary socialism.[13] Such a declaration suggests that the term *anarchist* had now been firmly established in Swiss bakuninist circles.

But it was not just a question of adopting the terms *anarchy* and *anarchist* to define the position of the anti-statists in opposition to the statists, the bakuninists now began to argue in favour of replacing the collectivist concept of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his work' by that of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need'. The discussion which led to the emergence of this anarchist *communist* precept seems to have been stimulated by an essay written by Guillaume in 1874 entitled *Idées sur l'organisation sociale*, in which he had expressed preference for such an idea.

> However, we thought the principle which should be approached as closely as possible is this one: 'From each according to his strength, to each according to his needs.' Once production has increased thanks to mechanical processes and the progress in industrial and agricultural sciences, so as to greatly exceed the needs of society – and this result will be obtained in the space of a few years after the revolution – once we have reached this point, we say, the share of each worker will no longer be measured with a scrupulous hand: each will be able to draw from the abundant social reserve, to the full extent of his needs without exhausting it . . . Meanwhile, during the period of transition, it is up to each community to determine for itself the method it believes most suitable for the sharing of the product of labour between its members.[14]

Guillaume of course here envisaged the collectivisation of consumption as an ultimate rather than an immediate aim, rather as Marx was to do in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* in 1875. Moreover, he himself did not see any radical departure from the original collectivist view in his essay.

Many years later, in a somewhat heated exchange of letters with Kropotkin in 1912, Guillaume insisted that the majority of participants who had declared for collectivism at Basle in 1869 had not adopted a doctrine characterised by the precept, 'la propriété *individuelle* des produits'. To some extent Nettlau corroborates Guillaume's claim here.[15] But Guillaume went further. Quoting from a letter from Varlin in 1870, which described the socialist line of the con-

gress as that of 'collectivism or non-authoritarian communism' he declared, 'We and Varlin gave the word collectivism the meaning of non-authoritarian communism in opposition to the (state) communists of the marxists.'[16] However, as Kropotkin pointed out, there is no hard evidence of this apart from Varlin's letter. Guillaume conceded that not all members of the International at that time were thinking of the community of products but still insisted that he, Varlin and Bakunin had publicly proposed the idea of *produits sociaux* as a complement to the idea of *travail social.* Certainly Bakunin's anti-statist argument about collectivism could be developed along anarchist communist lines:

> There has never been any such thing as private property, only individual appropriation of the labour of the community. He [Bakunin] is for the collective ownership of land in particular, and, in general, for collective wealth as the means of social liquidation. By social liquidation, he means the abolition of the political and legal state, which is the sanction and guarantee of the means whereby a small number of men appropriate for themselves the product of the labour of everyone else. All productive labour is above all social labour, production only being possible through the combined labour of generations past and present. There has never been labour which can be called individual labour.[17]

Kropotkin, however, did not think there was any real evidence to prove that Bakunin accepted the anti-statist communist idea. As he discovered, apart from Guillaume's writings there was in fact no elaboration of what the bakuninist collectivists thought about the distribution of the product of labour. Guillaume explained that this was because they believed that groups and associations should decide the question for themselves:

> For us, consumption has appeared as a natural function which, in the nature of things will organise itself once the question of property has been resolved, once the organisation has been completed, once production has been put on a new basis. One single point has seemed essential to us in regard to consumption, that is: not to lay down that society should be enclosed in advance in a rigid framework. We have insisted that we are the enemies of imposed rules and that we want the greatest latitude kept for associated groups on this point.[18]

The truth of the matter seems to have been that they did not have a very clear idea about how the socialisation of wealth would apply to consumption. It seems likely that Guillaume's essay of 1874 actually focussed attention on the precept 'to each according to his need' in a situation where the anti-statists were beginning to feel the need to define and clarify their ideas. It had originally been written for circulation among Italian comrades,[19] and it was the Italian Federation which first declared for anarchist communism.

According to Malatesta, by the summer or autumn of 1876 leading Italian militants had decided to abandon collectivism and to persuade delegates at the forthcoming Congress of the Italian Federation to declare for communism.

In Italy there were a few of us (Cafiero, Covelli, Costa, the undersigned and perhaps one or two others that I forget) who decided to abandon collectivism then professed by all the International and got communism accepted by the delegates of the Congress of Florence (1876) and thence by all the Italian Federation of the International.[20]

Nettlau seems to have thought that the Italians had reached their decision either because of their familiarity with Guillaume's essay or as a result of a discussion in the *Bulletin* in May where a correspondent had argued that, since there could be no clear distinction between capital and the product of labour, the latter would need to be collectivised to prevent the private accumulation of wealth and the resultant injustice.[21] Malatesta, Cafiero, Covelli and Costa were successful in their efforts to persuade their comrades to declare for the anarchist communist idea at the secret Congress of the Italian Federation held at a tiny country place – Tosti, not far from Florence – on 21 October 1876.[22]

Arbeiter Zeitung of Berne, founded by the lively militant Paul Brousse to develop revolutionary propaganda amongst the German-speaking Swiss, immediately hailed the Italian decision as an important step: 'An important act is the adoption of the common ownership of the product of labour by Italian socialism.'[23] Generally speaking, however, not a great deal of attention was paid to the decision of anyone else – indeed, according to Nettlau, other reports of the Italian Congress did not mention it, a fact which, he argues, supports the idea that it was not regarded as a major change or development of the bakuninist position. 'The reports of the congress do not mention this change and the omission shows, in every case, that although the development was mentioned, no one took any account of it.'[24] The Italian militants themselves certainly regarded the adoption of the communist idea as an important step for the Italian Federation, for it featured prominently in a letter explaining the Italian position from Cafiero and Malatesta to the *Bulletin* published on 3 December. But the declaration for the socialisation of the product of labour is presented in the letter as a complement to the collectivist programme and the Italians express their commitment, not to an anarchist communist

programme, but to a programme which is anarchist, collectivist and revolutionary.

The great majority of Italian socialists is grouped around the anarchist collectivist and revolutionary programme of the Italian Federation . . . The Italian Federation considers the collective ownership of *the products of labour* as the necessary complement of the collectivist programme, the *co-operation of all for the satisfaction of the needs of each* being the only rule of production and consumption which corresponds to the principle of solidarity.[25]

It would appear that the Italian Federation had declared for the anarchist communist idea as a natural development of the original collectivist position, so it is not entirely surprising that their decision evoked little interest or commend at this time when, in any case, the quarrel with social democrats and reformists, particularly in Italy, was tending to focus on the issue of revolutionary tactics.[26]

Meanwhile, as the discussion in the *Bulletin* and the reaction of *Arbeiter Zeitung* suggest, the question of the socialisation of consumption had already been raised among the anti-statist collectivists of Switzerland. In February 1876, a pamphlet, *Aux travailleurs manuels partisans de l'action politique*, had appeared in Geneva which spoke of anarchist communism for the first time, announcing the forthcoming publication of a special pamphlet to explain the meaning of it. The author of this piece was Dumartheray who was a member of *L'Avenir*, a group of refugees mainly from the Lyon area whose rejection of the limitations of collectivism and advocacy of anarchist communism may have been due to the influence of the old Lyonnais communism.[27]

It is difficult to know to what extent Dumartheray and the *Avenir* Group had arrived at their conclusions independently, for it was Elisée Reclus who actually first gave an exposé of anarchist communism at Lausanne in March 1876. No copy of the address has survived, but Guillaume describes it as 'a magnificent speech'. It must have made quite an impression, particularly on Dumartheray, who, many years later in conversation with Nettlau, recalled the event. 'In the meetings of the Internationalists and communalists (18 and 19 March 1876 at Lausanne), Elisée Reclus made a speech in which he recognised anarchist communism and that must have been such a novel event that it was still remembered many years later although the speech has not been preserved.'[28] The importance Dumartheray attached to the Lausanne speech, added to the fact that Reclus had close links with the refugee groups in Geneva, suggests that there must have been a close association between the distinguished communard and the Swiss

working class militant in fostering an interest and commitment to the anarchist communist idea amongst the bakuninists in Switzerland.[29] Ironically, unlike Reclus' speech, the letter from Malon favouring De Paepe's idea of a federative state which had been read out at the Lausanne meeting, was actually published in the *Bulletin*; and it was this letter which actually prompted the correspondence about anarchist communism in May which Nettlau seems to have thought influenced the Italian Federation.

Interest in anarchist communism in fact was not so easily transformed into a commitment of the movement in Switzerland as it had been in Italy. In August 1876, after consultation with his comrades, Guillaume finally published his *Idées sur l'organisation*. But as we have seen the essay presented the anarchist communist idea as an aim rather than the method of organising the distribution of the product of labour immediately after the revolution. In fact, Guillaume tended to argue that at the outset consumption was a matter for local groups to decide for themselves. Certainly Brousse now campaigned vigorously for the adoption of the anarchist communist idea; in February 1877, he gave a speech on the subject at St-Imier, and in the spring established an anarchist-communist party in Berne. Costa, now in exile in Switzerland, may have supported Brousse's efforts.[30] But there still seems to have been little enthusiastic support for anarchist communism when the question of the collectivisation of property was discussed at the Congress of the International at Verviers in September 1877. The report of the debate is not very clear but it does seem that Costa and Brousse argued that, since it was impossible either to differentiate clearly between the means of production and the product of labour or to evaluate the contribution of each individual worker, there had to be collectivisation of consumption as well as of production. Guillaume, however, saw no reason to mix the question of consumption with that of production, declaring that 'the only possible solution today is to share as they wish. Different solutions can be found together within the same groups.' And he was supported in his proposal that the question of the socialisation of production should be left on one side, by Montels and Werner – both of whom worked closely with Brousse.[31] Obviously, there was still no strong sympathy for anarchist communism among the internationalists in Switzerland. The first tentative step in this direction was only taken by the Jura Federation at their annual congress at La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1879, when Kropotkin put forward a proposal clearly based on Guillaume's ideas.

Kropotkin and anarchist communism 1877–1886

On his return to Russia, Kropotkin had been introduced to the Chaikovsky Circle by his friend Dmitri Klements, a gifted scholar who, like him, had felt obliged to abandon a scientific career to devote himself to the cause of the people.[32] The Chaikovsky Circle, which had sprung up in the main cities in the late sixties, had developed an approach which was both populist and socialist by the spring of 1872. The chaikovskists however were for the most part neither anti-statists nor insurrectionists, and, in so far as they had any defined political position at all, tended to be lavrovist rather than bakuninist in their sympathies.[33] Kropotkin, therefore, had not fitted easily into such a group, all the more so because his age and elevated position in society had created initial suspicion amongst the other members. For all that however, he had become a highly regarded member of the Circle and had taken a leading part in its activities, basically because of his sympathy for a socialism which, for all its limitations, had been born of total commitment to the cause of the people – 'our youth . . . were not theorists about socialism, but had become socialists by living no better than the workers live, by making no distinction between "mine" and "thine" in their circle, and by refusing to enjoy for their own satisfaction the riches they had inherited from their fathers.'[34] The experience of working with the chaikovskists had inspired and exhilarated Kropotkin as nothing had ever done before or perhaps ever would again.

> The two years that I worked for the Circle of Chaikovsky, before I was arrested, left a deep impression upon all my subsequent life and thought. During these two years it was life under pressure – that exhuberance of life when one feels at every moment the full throbbing of all the fibres of the inner self, and when life is really worth living.[35]

His main work for the Circle had involved the dangerous and exacting task of developing secret propaganda among the peasants and workers whilst maintaining social contacts in aristocratic circles and completing his work for the Geographical Society in order to avert suspicion. He had also been involved, however, with the attempt to produce a manifesto for the movement. The draft which he had produced is important in providing an indication of his views at this time – views which seem to have been essentially bakuninist with no sign of any nascent anarchist communism.[36] There is an over-riding concern with popular revolution. In this document, post-revolutionary society

is envisaged as being organised in free federations of workers' associations with the means of production collectivised and everyone receiving an equal share in the product of communal labour in return for an agreed contribution to production. It is asserted that everyone should be obliged to earn his living through his own labour and that this would be possible without entailing any hardship for anyone because, in a better organised society, no worker would ever have to support more than two dependents. Clearly on the economic issue Kropotkin had adopted a more narrowly collectivist line than even Bakunin himself.

After the grim period of his imprisonment, Kropotkin had escaped in the summer of 1876. The first months of exile had been spent in establishing a livelihood for himself in scientific journalism whilst living an anonymous and isolated existence first in Edinburgh and then in London in order to evade discovery by tsarist agents. He had finally rejoined his friends in the Jura in January 1877. It took time not only for him to recuperate from the strain and trauma of his recent experiences but also to adjust to a situation which had changed a good deal since his first visit to Europe in 1872. On the one hand, there was the threat from the social democrats which later that year was to culminate in the confrontation between statists and anti-statists at the Universal Socialist Congress at Ghent. On the other, there was the decline of the Belgian and the Jura Federations which had so inspired him in 1872.[37] Very distressed by it all, his immediate reaction was to become involved in agitation, particularly against the social democrats, rather than to pay much attention to the development of the ideas of anarchist communism. In April 1877, he involved himself with Brousse in the setting up of the new party in Berne to be clearly distinct from the German *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiter-Partei*. In spite of the fact that this party was actually anarchist communist, the statutes drafted by Kropotkin contain no definition of anarchist communism.[38]

His preoccupation with action rather than theory is very clear in a vigorous attack on parliamentarism he made in articles for the *Bulletin* in July 1877, in which he denounced the argument that the masses needed to be instructed in socialism by means of parliamentarism. He defined socialism simply as the conviction that everyone had the right to the product of his own labour, that society could and must be changed and that a development of the people's will to revolt was necessary to achieve this. Socialism, he insisted, was only an expression of the aspirations of the masses which was hindered rather than helped by parliamentary savants. Insistent on the necessity of a revolution

carried through by the people themselves, he declared that although popular ideas about the future society might be vague it was only through popular revolutions that they could be developed, and that the popular will to revolt would emerge through practical acts of protest and revolt. Propaganda was needed, not to reach the ideals of socialism, but to spread the conviction that these ideals could only be realised through popular revolution. 'What we lack is socialist revolutionary propaganda, the dissemination of these convictions: 1) that the people once under arms will only obtain what they win for themselves; 2) that expropriation being what is wanted, they must carry it through for themselves; 3) that the revolution must be maintained without interruption for a certain time.'[39]

Clearly at this stage Kropotkin still subscribed to a narrowly bakuninist view and being preoccupied as Bakunin had been in 1872 with the need for action, did not appreciate the importance of the question of the development of anarchist communist ideas. This was perhaps not altogether surprising after his long separation from fellow bakuninists and developments in the Anti-authoritarian International and the intensity of his experience as an agitator in the especially desperate situation in Russia. It was only after he had acquired solid experience as an activist in the Western European movement that he began to concern himself with the issue of anarchist theory by taking part in discussions about the clarification of the ideological position of the Jura Federation at the Congress of Fribourg in 1878.

The discussion of anarchist ideas on this occasion began with the reading of a letter from Elisée Reclus.[40] Reclus posed three questions: 'Why are we revolutionaries? – Why are we anarchists? – Why are we collectivists?' They were revolutionaries, he explained, because peaceful evolution had to culminate in revolution if social justice was to be established. They were anarchists, he argued, because they could only struggle effectively for freedom by rejecting the hierarchical ways of the bourgeoisie and acting in accordance with personal rights and duties as free, responsible individuals – a free society could only develop after the suppression of the state. Nevertheless, recognising the need for and strength of cooperative action they were collectivists committed to the collectivisation of property, production and consumption:

But if we are anarchists, the enemies of any master, we are also international collectivists, for we understand that life is impossible without social grouping. Where in isolation we can do nothing, in close association we can change the world. We associate ourselves one with another as free and equal men, working on a common

task with mutual relations regulated by reciprocal justice and benevolence . . . The land will become collective property, barriers will be removed and the land, henceforth belonging to all, will be developed for the pleasure and well-being of everyone. The products required will be precisely those that the land can best provide, and production will exactly meet needs, without anything ever being lost as is the case with the disorganised labour of today. In the same way, the distribution of all wealth between men will be taken away from the private exploiter and carried on through the normal functioning of the whole of society.

Reclus concluded by refusing to give a precise vision of the liberated society, declaring that it was the spontaneous action of free men which would create the society of the future and give it its form – a form which, like all natural phenomena, would always be changing. The only certainty was that so long as the present iniquity continued the anarchist collectivists would remain in a state of permanent revolt.

This exposition of anarchist collectivism clearly foreshadowed the uncompromising anarchist communist position of 1880, but Reclus appears to have been content to describe distribution according to need in terms of a spontaneous communal response. It was Brousse who, during the ensuing debate, put forward the case for distribution according to need clearly and primarily in terms of the individual, and declared unequivocably for communism. The product, he argued, as the result of human labour was endowed like property with a social character, and therefore justice indicated communism as the economic basis for future social organisation. And since it was clear that with no more idlers there would soon be a situation of abundance as a result of considerable economic development, it would be possible for each person to work according to his ability and consume according to his need.

The product itself, made up of matter and shaped by man's labour which is a social product, must itself have a social character. Justice, by its very nature therefore points to communism as the economic basis for the social organisation of the future. We therefore already perceive very clearly a society where there will no longer be any idlers, where industrial development will be more extensive and in which – thanks to these two conditions – each one working *according to strength*, that is to say as long as the work remains 'attractive' for him, there will be such an increase of wealth that without depriving his neighbours, each one will be able to take from it *whatever he needs*.

Brousse nevertheless, even though denouncing the 'worker state' and the law of majorities, envisaged the possibility of opposing the state by gradual change at the level of the commune, proceeding through collectivism to communism – a process that did not exclude participation in

the voting procedure. He declared that if they waited until everyone was convinced of the justice of anarchist ideas to establish a new society, they would wait a very long time, and stressing the importance of the autonomy of the communes, he argued that at least something could be achieved on a local basis to oppose the state and the oppressive economic and social organisation it sustained.[41]

Kropotkin, in response to Reclus and Brousse, declared that it was essential to define collectivism as opposed to authoritarian communism of other schools, but collectivism as he expressed it was simply a reiteration of the original bakuninist position:

> *Levaschov* summarises as follows the essential points that would have to be brought out in the anarchist programme we are planning to draw up: *Collectivism* compared to the *authoritarian Communism* of other schools, that is to say the collective ownership of the land, houses, raw materials, capital and the instruments of labour, and the sharing of the products of labour according to the method found most appropriate by the communes and associations.

In fact, he focussed his speech on what he regarded as the main point responsible for the schism between anarchists and statists, namely that social revolution could only be produced by a vast popular uprising and the violent expropriation of all capital. During the debate, he warmly supported Brousse in his preoccupation with the autonomy of the communes as a vital factor in the development of the popular struggle:

> *Levaschov* insists on the importance for anarchists of the claim to communal autonomy . . . The coming revolutions will have to be carried out under the flag of the municipal and agricultural communes . . . It is also within the independent communes that the socialist tendencies of the masses will necessarily manifest themselves: it is there on the basis of collectivism that the beginnings of the new society will be sketched out. To work for the free communes, therefore, means to work for the historic phase through which we shall pass to a better future.[42]

He even went so far as to endorse Brousse's suggestion about the vote in this context. But, echoing the uncompromising revolutionary anarchist line of Reclus, he made it clear that his approach was much more anti-statist and insurrectionary than that of Brousse.

> As an inevitable consequence of the negation of the state and this manner of envisaging the revolution, the anarchists refuse not only to put into action any tactic which could lead to the strengthening of the already tottering idea of the state, they also seek to awaken in the people by theoretical propaganda and above all insurrectional acts, the popular sentiment and initiative, from the point of view both of violent expropriation and the disorganisation of the state.

All this was little more than a reiteration of the ideas he had expressed in 1877. In fact, Kropotkin does not seem to have taken an entirely clear-cut position at Fribourg.

For all his association with the German-speaking anarchist communist party of Berne, he had still not been prepared to consider the question of anarchist communism at the Congress of the Jura Federation in 1878. Perhaps he still had reservations about the idea. Perhaps Guillaume and Schwitzguébel had warned him that the workers of the movement were not ready to accept it and, anxious to avoid a possibly divisive issue when his primary concern had been to foster popular revolutionary action, Kropotkin had refrained from joining Brousse in pressing the argument for anarchist communism.[43] (Undoubtedly he regarded the main point of difference dividing the anarchists from the socialists as that of popular revolution.) Kropotkin's almost obsessive preoccupation with action at this stage, however, meant that in general he had supported the dynamic Brousse in spite of all the tell-tale signs of gradualism and even reformism which had begun to appear in his speeches. The Congress finally ended with the ideological position still not clearly defined. Participants contented themselves with referring the issues of the destructivist vote and an exposition of anarchist collectivist and revolutionary socialism to the sections for further study, and simply declared for the principles of the collectivisation of all wealth and the abolition of the state, 'for collective appropriation of social wealth, the abolition of the state in all its forms, including the would-be central office of public services'.

By the time of the Congress at La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1879, with Guillaume having left for France and Brousse expelled, Kropotkin had emerged as the leading figure in what remained of the Jura Federation and played a dominating role in the proceedings. On this occasion, he asserted that it was now generally understood what anarchists wanted for the future, namely anarchist communism as the aim with collectivism as a transitory form of property, the abolition of all forms of government and the free federation of producer and consumer groups. He called for: '1) Anarchist *communism* – as an aim, and *collectivism* as a transitory form of property; 2) The abolition of all forms of government and the free federation of producer and consumer groups.'[44] This would seem to suggest a compromise position over the communist issue based on Brousse's proposals of 1878. Kropotkin himself declared in a letter to the *Plebe* in November: 'I had to produce a general formulation which best summarised the shades of anarchist

opinion.'[45] But there was no further discussion or elaboration of the point, for his main preoccupation was still action rather than theory. Indeed, as a prelude to putting forward the basis for a programme of action, he argued, echoing Bakunin, that there was now a greater need to define practice than theory, for the theoretical part of the anarchist programme had already been quite well developed and expounded.

> And although there remains an immense amount for us to do to *spread* our ideas and to elaborate the *details* of them, nevertheless the essential part of the work, the theoretical elaboration which above all gives moral strength to a party, is for the most part accomplished; met with a sceptical smile at its beginnings, our party has obliged its adversaries to avow that anarchy is the most splendid idea ever conceived by the human spirit.
>
> But if the *theoretical* part of our programme has been well elaborated and expounded, one could not say as much of the *practical* part.

In his paper *L'idée anarchiste au point de vue de sa réalisation pratique*, he certainly made it quite clear that the reformist implications of Brousse's suggestions had definitely been abandoned, but the lack of discussion about theory left the ideological position relating to consumption in a future society vague. The decisions of the Congress at La Chaux-de-Fonds did nothing to rectify this situation, for they simply declared that Kropotkin's paper should be published and presented to all sections, socialist groups and anyone interested, as the basis for the elaboration of a programme.

Nevertheless, for all this continued preoccupation with action rather than theory, Kropotkin's polemical exchange with Costa in the pages of the *Plebe* in November made it clear, not only that he himself now preferred communism to collectivism, but that he believed the masses would immediately find the latter a more practical and advantageous way of organising society, once expropriation had been accomplished, than was generally imagined. And during the year that followed his approach to the theoretical position changed – perhaps primarily as a result of discussions with Reclus and the Genevan anarchists Dumartheray and Herzig, with whom he became much more closely associated in the setting up of *Le Révolté*.[46]

In March 1880, although still holding firm to the idea of autonomous communes as the focal point of revolution and basis for the future organisation ('It is the communes, absolutely independent, freed from the tutelage of the state, which alone will be able to give us the necessary milieu for the revolution and the means of accomplishing it'), he made it clear that he had abandoned a narrow preoccupation with

the territorial commune for a broader concept of communal organisation based on the concept of the associations advocated by Reclus.

For us Commune is no longer a territorial agglomeration; it is rather a generic name, a synonym for the grouping of equals, knowing neither frontiers nor barriers. The social Commune will cease very quickly to be a clearly defined whole. Each group of the Commune will be necessarily drawn to other similar groups in other communes; it will be grouped, federated with them, by links at least as solid as those which attach it to its fellow citizens, it will constitute a Commune of interests whose members are spread out in a thousand cities and villages. Any individual will only find satisfaction for his needs by grouping himself with other individuals having the same tastes and living in a hundred other Communes.[47]

It seems likely that Kropotkin was responding here to warnings from Reclus and Herzig that revolution based exclusively on existing communes would only produce a new form of authority vested in the commune instead of the centralised state.

Reclus in fact was hostile to the communalist position favoured by the Jurassians: at the Congress at La Chaux-de-Fonde in the autumn, he was to declare: 'Up to now, the communes have only been little states, and even the Paris Commune though insurrectional at the base, was governmental at the top, maintaining the whole hierarchy of officials and employees. We are no more communalists than statists; we are anarchists. Let us not forget that'.[48] Kropotkin, however, in his article on the Paris Commune in March 1880, argued that, given time, it would have become anarchist, that indeed the next revolution in France and Spain would be communalist and would take up again the work of the Commune cut short by the assassins of Versailles.

At the same time, Kropotkin was actually becoming anxious about criticism of the inadequacies of anarchist theory. In the same article, insisting that the anarchist idea was emerging among the people as a result of the experience of the Commune – 'it was born of the collective spirit, it originated from the heart of an entire people' – he quoted the critical comments of sympathetic statists:

A few statists, those least imbued with governmental prejudices, were saying that the anarchist ideal is so far away from us that we should not preoccupy ourselves unduly with it at the moment. The anarchist theory also lacks a formula both simple and concrete to define its starting point, to give substance to its conceptions, and demonstrate that they are based on a tendency having a real existence among the people . . . We needed to find a clearer, more distinguishable formula which had its basic elements in the reality of things.[49]

In the summer of 1880 Kropotkin wrote to Reclus and Cafiero to tell them that he had become convinced of the necessity of the Jura Feder-

ation adopting an uncompromising anarchist communist position. After long discussions with Dumartheray and Herzig, and correspondence with Reclus, it was agreed to put a proposal to this effect to the Congress of the Jura Federation in October, even though there was no certainty that it would be accepted. In fact there was still resistance to the communist idea among the delegates and the resolution in favour of anarchist communism was only finally accepted because of the effect on the younger element of an eloquent speech by Cafiero. Kropotkin recalled all this in a letter written to Nettlau in 1895:

In your preface to Bakunin you mention the step made to declare ourselves Communists. For us in the Jura Federation, it was a concerted action on behalf of us in the Section of Geneva, in company with Elisée Reclus, to bring the question before the Congress of Chaud-de-Fonds in October 1880, and to induce the Jura Federation to declare themselves *Communists*. I thought it an absolutely necessary step and wrote in this sense to Reclus and Cafiero . . .

It was accepted, but reluctantly, especially by Schwitzguébel (the Programme Socialiste he has just published summed up the views which prevailed in the Jura) and Pindy (he was especially afraid of the impression it would produce in France where Communism and Monastery were so often associated) . . . It was very deliberately that we took that step – of great importance as it appeared later on – after long discussions among Dumartheray, Herzig and myself and correspondence with Elisée Reclus who greeted this step at once and gave it full support at the Congress.

The admirable paper of Cafiero was a charming surprise to us, the partisans of abandoning the word 'Collectivism'. He promised support, but we did not foresee that he would come with such an excellent paper. The Jura youth gave full support and so it passed. This speech of Cafiero carried the situation.

The result was immediately felt . . .

I write you that as you seem to have overlooked the Chaux-de-Fonds Congress. We (in Geneva) looked at it as a very important stage and attached just weight to its decision as we were not sure at all that the decision would be in favour of Communism.[50]

Discussion at the Congress centred on the programme drawn up by Schwitzguébel expressing the views of the workers of the Federation of the Courtelary district (to which Kropotkin made reference in his letter) – a programme which was communalist and collectivist.[51]

The programme began by urging the necessity of anarchist socialists defining their position in opposition to the authoritarian socialists. 'The more or less intelligent and appropriate intervention of the party which possesses the theoretical conception of this revolution . . . is . . . an important factor. From this flows the necessity of not waiting for the revolution to fall from the sky but preparing for it . . . ' The programme

went on to explain how the transformation of the property system could only be achieved by society itself freed from the power and authority of the state – a revolutionary process which, it argued, would centre on the Commune. The latter would be the starting point of revolution and the means of effecting revolutionary change because of the development, in the wake of the Paris Commune, of a new revolutionary tradition associated with the idea of communal autonomy and federation. It denounced the authoritarian socialist idea of the communist state: 'The communist state, even more than the bourgeois state, would nullify the individual and govern by force. For us, the solution of the social problem includes not only the most complete realisation possible of material well-being for the masses, but also the broadest conquest of liberty for everyone.' Having thus so closely associated the idea of communism with state socialism, the document reiterated the Jurassian preference for collectivism as the general form of a new society with some idea of working towards the socialisation of consumption:

> Collectivism appears to us . . . to be the general form of a new society, but we will work with all our strength so that its organisation and functioning may be free . . .
>
> What will be the functions of the commune? – Looking after all local wealth; control of the use by the trade unions of the various assets, subsoil, land, buildings, tools and raw materials; control of the organisation of labour insofar as concerns the general interest; the organisation of exchange and possibly the distribution and consumption of products . . .

This was, of course, the position which Kropotkin claimed had been reached in the Jura in 1879, and clearly the Courtelary section was not prepared to go beyond it.

Kropotkin opened the discussion at the Congress. He endorsed the Courtelary section's preoccupation with the need to define the anarchist position. But, referring derisively to the current fashion whereby anybody who recognised the necessity for any change in the relations between labour and capital claimed to be a socialist, he argued that, whilst there was no call for anarchists to concern themselves with people who call themselves socialists simply to check the development of socialism, there was a need to bring out more clearly in any published résumé of the programme the essential difference that existed between the anarchists and the evolutionist schools of socialism. He insisted that the anarchist socialists had quite a different view from other socialists about how the work of the revolution had to be accomplished. The latter (and this even included some revolutionary

socialists) maintained that the people were not ready for a fundamental change in the property system and therefore urged the necessity of a political revolution to prepare for social revolution. The former, however, insisted that expropriation carried out by the people themselves

will be the aim and motor of the next European struggle and we have to make every effort to ensure that this expropriation becomes an accomplished fact as the outcome of the battle which we all feel approaching. It is this expropriation, carried out by the people and followed by the immense movement of ideas to which it will give rise, which alone will be able to give the next revolution the strength needed to overcome the obstacles which rise up before it.[52]

Kropotkin had never before expressed himself so forcefully about the need to differentiate the theoretical position of the anarchists from that of other socialists – a clear reflection of his anxiety about the development of parliamentary forms of socialism, particularly in France where efforts were being made to rally all socialist workers around a 'minimum programme' for the elections of 1881.[53]

Kropotkin made no criticism of the communalist approach of the Courtelary programme but he did go on to insist that the word 'collectivist' should be abandoned and that the Jurassians should declare themselves frankly communist. The internationalists had originally preferred the term 'collectivist' because communism had been associated with monastic socialism, but by collectivism, he explained, they had meant the socialisation of capital and the liberty of groups to introduce whatever form of distribution of the products of labour they thought most appropriate to their situation. However, collectivism was now being given quite a different meaning – evolutionists used it to mean the individual enjoyment of products, whilst others used it to mean only a limited collectivisation of capital. 'It is time to put an end to this misunderstanding,' he declared, 'and there is only one way to do that – to abandon the word collectivism and declare ourselves frankly communist, whilst bringing out the difference which exists between our conception of anarchist communism and that which was spread by the mystical, authoritarian schools before 1848'.[54]

Reclus, speaking in support of Kropotkin's proposal, elaborated the positive argument in favour of communism. He declared that once the means of production had been collectivised, the product would be the result of communal efforts, so that it would be impossible to provide an accurate assessment of the value of the individual contribution on which to base an equitable distribution of the products of labour. Decisions about consumption inevitably decided by accident or caprice

would destroy the collectivist society. Convinced that the free individual would learn spontaneously to act in association with others for the common good, he declared that everyone should be free to take whatever they thought necessary for consumption, limited by no other rule than that which proceeds from the solidarity of interests and mutual support amongst associates. The fear of scarcity was groundless because of the enormous waste which would end with the destruction of the capitalist system. Commonsense dictated that the appropriation of land and factories must lead to the socialisation of the product of labour:

> If the great factory, that is to say, the earth, and all the secondary factories which are found there, are put into social ownership, if work is done by all and the quantity and quality of what is produced result precisely from the solidarity of effort, to whom must it legitimately belong if not to the whole indivisible work-force? What rule could guide the accountants who work out the shares and enable them to recognise what should be assigned to each individual from the manna produced by the labour of the whole of humanity, including previous generations? This distribution made by chance or caprice can have no other result than to deposit in collectivist society the germ of dissensions, struggles and death. What is true and just is that the products resulting from the labour of all belong to all, and that each should freely take his share to consume as he pleases, without any other rule than that arising from the solidarity of interests and the mutual respect of associates. It would be absurd moreover to fear scarcity, since the enormous loss of products caused by the current wastefulness of commerce and private appropriation will have finally ceased . . . universal good sense has understood that the expropriation of the land and factories necessarily leads to the community of products.

Reclus went on to express reservations about the importance given to communes in the Courtelary programme; he pointed out that until now communes, including even the Commune of Paris, had only been small states and declared that groupings of revolutionary forces would establish themselves freely outside all communal organisation: 'the groupings of revolutionary forces will be made freely, outside any communal organisation'.

Schwitzguébel responded to Reclus and Kropotkin's advocacy of communism by declaring that, although an anarchist communist himself, he believed that popular resistance to collectivist ideas indicated that a frankly communist programme would only increase the difficulty of securing working-class support – particularly whilst the communist idea was still regarded as a system excluding all liberty. In his view, a great deal of preparatory work would be requiired to lead the people to accept communism.

Herzig, obviously wishing to draw attention to the heresies which had emerged from Brousse's preoccupation with municipal agitation, then intervened to support and expand on Reclus' anti-communalist view. He declared that the Courtelary programme, in attributing so much importance to the commune, simply envisaged replacing the authority of the state by the decentralised authority of the communes, and he went on to condemn involvement in political struggles at the communal level, even to overthrow the state, insisting that this meant a readoption of the legal approach in direct conflict with anarchist principles.

At this point, Cafiero made his particularly persuasive contribution to the discussion. It was an impressive and eloquent speech in which he refuted an allegation (apparently made by a hostile orator at the Congrès du Centre) to the effect that 'Communism and anarchy scream at finding themselves together', arguing that, on the contrary, anarchy and communism were complementary concepts which could not be separated one from the other, 'these two terms [anarchy and communism] being synonyms of liberty and equality, and the two necessary and indivisible terms of the revolution'.[55]

He declared that the socialisation of capital without the socialisation of the products of labour would entail the preservation of the monetary system and thence the accumulation of wealth which, once associated with the right of inheritance, would ensure the disappearance of all equality. The individual apportionment of products, moreover, would result not only in the re-establishment of inequality among men, but also of inequality between different types of work with non-manual labour for the better-off and manual labour for the poorest, a system bringing with it a rebirth of the system of reward and punishment. As regards collective work, it was in any case impossible to evaluate the individual contribution even in terms of labour as the socialists had suggested, for, as they themselves had conceded, everyone was not capable of producing the same amount in a given time. He went on to condemn a new socialist nuance which had appeared as a result of attempts at clarification of this question – a nuance which, reviving the errors of the past, based the limited concept of collectivisation on a distinction between what was required for cooperative production, *les valeurs de production*, and what was necessary for consumption, *les valeurs d'usage*. Such a distinction, Cafiero argued, simply could not be applied in real life; if coal and oil were *valeurs de production* because they were necessary to keep machines in working order, why deny this

ascription to the food and light necessary for the well-being of man, the finest machine of all? Cafiero concluded with a discussion of the problem of scarcity. The only serious objection to communism, he declared, came from those who, whilst accepting it as an ultimate aim, argued that the shortage of products at the beginning would necessitate a rationing in distribution which would be best worked out on the basis of the amount of labour each individual contributed to production. Rationing, however, he insisted, must be organised on the basis of needs and not merits; there was no reason why the great human family of the future could not function as the ordinary family did now, sharing out resources according to need in times of scarcity.

But now let us start considering the one and only serious objection that our enemies have advanced against communism. All are agreed that we should go in the direction of communism, but they make the observation to us that at the beginning, products not being sufficiently abundant, it will be necessary to establish rationing, sharing, and that the best way to share the products of labour would be that based on the quantity of work that each has done.

To this we shall reply that, in the future society, even if obliged to adopt rationing, we would remain communists: that is to say rationing would be carried out not according to merit, but according to need . . .

Even during scarcity, this principle of rationing according to need is applied in the family. Would it be otherwise in the great family of the future.[56]

It was not possible to be an anarchist without being a communist, Cafiero declared, because the least idea of limitation contained already within it the germs of authoritarianism; they had to be communists because it was only in communism that true equality would be realised.

One cannot be . . . anarchist without being communist. For the least idea of limitation contains already in itself the germs of authoritarianism. It could not manifest itself without immediately engendering the law, the judge, the policeman. We must be communists, for it is in communism that we realise true equality.

The debate concluded with Pindy expressing anxiety about the reaction of the French working class who, although instinctively communist, recoiled from a term they associated with the ideas of 1848. But after Cafiero's speech, he seems to have accepted the necessity of giving things their true name in order to unmask the pseudo-progressive socialists.

The Congress then adopted resolutions to be added to the Courtelary programme which rejected its view of the commune and insisted on the socialisation of the product as well as the collectivisation of the means of production.

Ideas expressed about the commune may give the impression that we have to substitute for the present form of the state a more limited form which will be the Commune. We want the disappearance of any statist form, general or restricted, and the Commune is for us only the synthetic expression of the organic form of free human groupings.

The idea of collectivism has given rise to dubious interpretations that it is important to erase. We want collectivism with all its logical consequences, not only from the point of view of the collective appropriation of the means of production, but also the enjoyment of the collective consumption of products. Anarchist communism will thus be the necessary and inevitable consequence of the social revolution and the expression of the new civilisation that will be inaugurated by that revolution.

Quite clearly the anarchists at the Congress of La Chaux-de-Fonds had adopted an uncompromisingly radical position which left no doubt as to the difference between them and the rest of the socialist movement. On the one hand, they had finally rejected the Jurassian preoccupation with communal autonomy as the means of affecting revolutionary change and the commune as the basis of future social organisation, thus making a clean break with the ideas of Brousse which developed into municipal socialism, and those of trade unionists like Schwitzguébel which were later to emerge as revolutionary syndicalism.[57] On the other hand, they had finally declared for communism in spite of the anxieties of leading militants like Guillaume, Schwitzguébel and Pindy about the effect such a commitment would have on working-class support – a step which served to reinforce the division between themselves and the social democrats and even to separate them to some extent from the anarchist movement in Spain, which clung obstinately to collectivism.

Kropotkin was delighted and always attached a vital significance to the decisions taken at La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1880. In the letter of 1895 to Nettlau, he recalled that the Genevan group had regarded the Congress as 'a very important stage' and went on to declare that although Guillaume had later described it as a mistake, he himself now thought it had been 'very good' – indeed he insisted that it had had an immediate and important impact, particularly on the decisions of the Le Havre Congress in France.

The result was immediately felt. Several Blanquists approved us very much, saying that they always had been communists. But the chief result was the Le Havre congress where Kahn went from Switzerland and carried the Congress for 'Communisme-libertaire'. The word sprang up there. Bordat, Gautier, Mollin joined anarchism at once and the separation from the collectivists was achieved.[58]

Certainly Pindy's anxieties do seem to have been confounded by the response of French workers' representatives at the Congress of Le Havre in voting by a large majority for a resolution which declared for libertarian communism as a final aim:

The national labour–socialist congress of Le Havre (4th session) proclaims the necessity for the collective appropriation, with all possible speed, and by all possible means, of the land, subsoil and instruments of labour, this period being regarded as the transitory phase on the way to libertarian communism.[59]

Anarchist communism was also accepted by the Italian socialists at the Congress of Chiasso in December 1880. Subsequent events in Switzerland, however, demonstrated the soundness of Schwitzguébel's warnings about the difficulty of getting the anarchist communist message across to the workers of the Jura, for the early eighties saw the virtual disappearance of the Swiss anarchist movement – a point that Kropotkin does not mention here, presumably because he regarded France as a more favourable environment for the development of anarchism. Kropotkin's comment also ignores the problems presented to the Spanish anarchist movement by the adoption of anarchist communism at this stage.

At the Congress of the Anti-authoritarian International at Verviers in 1877, the Spanish delegates had firmly rejected the communist idea. It was too closely connected, in their view, with German state socialism:

We want the common ownership of the instruments of labour as well as the land for the community.

But this gives autonomy to each community of producers and each receives according to his production.

This conception however is not that of the German communists. For them it is the state which, like Providence, distributes to each according to his needs. This is a big difference. We cannot say that we agree with the German communists about the community.[60]

When Costa had responded by insisting that communism meant that each person should decide for himself what he needed, not the state (*A chacun selon sa volonte*), Víñas had declared that he was simply offering a licence to idlers: 'To each according to his will that is the wish to do nothing. Everyone must work to eat.' The Spanish Federation had remained firmly committed to collectivism and there was consequently no immediate positive response to the decision of the Jurassians at La Chaux-de-Fonds, indeed at their Congress at Barcelona in September 1881 they reiterated their earlier commitment. Miguel Rubio first

appeared as advocate of the communist idea at the Congress of Seville in 1882, having come to the conclusion (he later claimed) that it was a logical development of the collectivist ideal, 'all for one and one for all' in the programme of the Alliance.[61] His proposal was rejected after an important speech by José Llunas Pujols, the Federation's leading exponent of collectivism.[62] Libertarian communism only began to make a real impact in Spain in 1883 in Barcelona, partly perhaps because of the proximity of the anarchist communist movement in the Lyon area and the publicity surrounding the Lyon trial, and partly because of the influence of a circle of Italian anarchists in the city. In 1884, Georges Herzig spent some time in Barcelona expounding anarchist communist ideas and in 1885 a manifesto was issued by Los grupos communistas anarquistas de Barcelona. According to Nettlau, these first communists unfortunately nourished a great contempt for collectivism and the collectivists adopted an inflexible, hostile attitude in response.[63] The tensions which developed in the movement as a result of the arguments between collectivists and communists were only resolved in September 1888, when the Congress of Valencia set up the Organización anarquista de la Región Española which included in its membership all revolutionary anarchists 'without distinction between methods or economic schools'.[64]

It was with the help of Kropotkin's writings as well as those of Reclus, Grave and Malatesta, that the anarchist communists endeavoured to bring about the triumph of their ideas in the Spanish movement.[65] Kropotkin seems to have been fairly insensitive in his failure to appreciate the divisive effect of trying to secure an uncompromising commitment tof the Spanish movement to anarchist communism. Nevertheless, anxiety about the intransigent position adopted on either side finally constrained him to call for support for the accord at Valencia in 1888, even though he insisted that communism would be victorious in the end.[66] Undoubtedly, Kropotkin was unhappy about the damage the movement may have sustained as a result of internal controversy but for him the triumph of anarchist ideas was so important that it ultimately outweighed any anxieties he may have felt about tensions generated by the collectivist communist debate.

In this, his approach differed markedly from that of Malatesta. The latter, for all his commitment to anarchist communism, was always anxious to draw revolutionary socialists of all tendencies to work in closer association with each other for the common aim of revolution, and he was dismayed at the hard-line attitudes generated by the con-

troversy in Spain. Malatesta, in fact, had doubts as to whether it would be possible in all cases to proceed straight to communism in the immediate wake of the revolution. In an outline programme he drew up for discussion in the Italian anarchist movement in 1884, he suggested that, important as it was to implement the principles of anarchist communism without delay to avoid the bad effects associated with collectivism, the solidarity of the working class might not be sufficiently developed, particularly in conditions of scarcity, to allow this at the beginning and a brief collectivist phase might be necessary in some places.[67] In contrast with this, Kropotkin, like Reclus and Cafiero, being convinced that scientific evidence indicated there would be no serious problems of scarcity, insisted that it was that very freedom for the individual in anarchist communism which was so essential to the development of solidarity in the new society.[68]

Kropotkin now began to emerge as the leading exponent of an uncompromising anarchist communism. But he did not really begin to discuss the question in any depth until some eighteen months after the Congress at La Chaux-de-Fonds. As we have seen, it had been Reclus and above all Cafiero rather than Kropotkin who had played the most significant roles in the congress debate relating to anarchist communism. This had not occurred as the result of any prior arrangement – Kropotkin, it seems, had been content to argue in general terms that the communist idea was essential to a clear differentiation between socialists genuinely committed to popular expropriation and those who wanted to limit it to a greater or lesser extent.

It was in March 1882, in an editorial on the Commune of Paris for *Le Révolté*, that he again discussed the communist idea. In this article, he argued that the doctrinaire collectivism, which had sought to establish a distinction between capital and wealth and envisaged only the collectivisation of the means of production, was now being rejected by the workers. Realising that consumer goods which sustained life were just as necessary to production as machines, fuel and so forth, and that without the socialisation of all wealth injustices would continue, they were abandoning the collectivism of the theoreticians for the more simple and practical form of anti-authoritarian communism: namely, anarchist communism. Revolutionary proletarians, with the unanimous support of those who attended their meetings, were calling for the socialisation of all wealth and distribution according to need.[69]

Apart from his insistence on the popularisation of the communist idea Kropotkin was doing little more than reiterate points made at the

Congress of La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1880. In November and December 1882 he published his first articles on expropriation. The argument, however, focussed on the importance of not compromising the ideal of popular expropriation and again he did not make much attempt to explore the problem of consumption in any depth. He insisted that the revolution would not succeed unless everything that could be used to exploit the people was collectivised:

Expropriation, that then absolutely is the command that must be followed on the pain of it [the revolution] failing in its historic mission. He called for the complete expropriation of all those who have the means of exploiting human beings, and the return to the national community of all that can be used by anyone to exploit others.[70]

With partial expropriation, the old order would soon re-establish itself – 'If social wealth remains in the hands of the few who own it now . . . the insurrection will not be a revolution, and everything will have to begin again.' Similarly, expropriation had to be general – had to be carried out on a large scale – otherwise it would not be possible to ensure that immediate improvement in the lot of the oppressed which was essential to give the people a real commitment to defend the revolution against reaction.

So that the revolution may be more than a word, so that reaction does not take us back the next day to the position we were in before, the conquest of each day must be worth the trouble of being defended. The destitute man of yesterday must no longer be destitute today.

General expropriation alone can satisfy the multitude of the suffering and oppressed. We must take it from the realm of theory into that of practice. But in order that expropriation should correspond to the principle that private property should be abolished and given to all, that expropriation must be accomplished on a massive scale. On a small scale, it will only be seen as vulgar pillage; on a large scale, it is the beginning of social reorganisation . . . when a whole region, and large towns with their suburbs get rid of their rulers, our task is completely clearly delineated – the entire means of production must revert to the community, social property held by private individuals must go back to its true master, every one so that each may have his broad share in consumption, thus production may continue in all that is necessary and useful, and social life, far from being interrupted be taken up again with the greatest energy.

In general terms, the articles did not really add anything to what Cafiero had said earlier, except with regard to the point Kropotkin made about the first priority of providing for the needs of the people during a revolution to ensure enthusiastic popular support. But this was a point which, in fact, Reclus seems to have touched on as early as

1877. In an article for *Le Travailleur* he had argued that popular support for the great railway strikes in the USA had been lost because of the hardship suffered by ordinary consumers; instead of stopping the trains running, the strikers should have taken over the system and operated it themselves for their own and everyone's benefit. 'The great question is always that of bread: the hunger of the producers caused the strike; that of the consumers put an end to it,' he had declared.[71] Kropotkin himself only developed this point after his release from Clairvaux when he wrote the articles on expropriation which were to provide the basis for his important work *The Conquest of Bread.*[72]

Nevertheless, by 1883 Kropotkin had emerged as the leading exponent of anarchist communism, partly because of the success of *Le Révolté* and partly because of the leading role he played at the anarchist trials at Lyon. Certainly, it seems very likely that he was principally responsible for the Anarchist Declaration read out to the court on 12 January 1883 by Tressaud of Marseille which contained a summary of the ideals of the accused:

> We want liberty, that is to say we demand for every human being the right and the means to do whatever pleases him, and only what pleases him; and to satisfy entirely all his needs without any restriction other than what is naturally impossible and the needs of his neighbours which are equally worthy of respect.
>
> We want liberty and we believe its existence to be incompatible with the existence of any power no matter what its origin and form, whether it be elected or imposed, monarchical or republican, whether inspired by divine right or popular right, Holy Ampulla or universal suffrage . . .
>
> In a word, the substitution, in human relations, of free contract, which can always be modified and cancelled, for administrative and legal control, for an imposed discipline: such is our ideal.
>
> Anarchists purpose therefore to teach the people how to do without government as they have started to learn how to do without God.
>
> Equally they will learn to dispense with property owners . . .
>
> We ourselves believe that capital, the common inheritance of humanity, since it is the fruit of the collaboration of generations past and present, must be at the disposal of all, in such a way that no one can be excluded; and that no one, on the other hand, can seize any part to the detriment of the rest.
>
> We want, in a word, equality: real equality, as a corollary or rather a prime condition of liberty. From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs: no prescription can prevail against claims which are both legitimate and necessary.[73]

Quite clearly this was a much more succinct and eloquent statement of the basic principles of anarchist communism than that which had emerged from the Congress of La Chaux-de-Fonds – in spite of a

tendency to oversimplify the notion of expropriation by using the word 'Capital' to denote social wealth rather than just the means of production. The Declaration was, moreover, much more widely publicised because of the trial, than the discussions and resolutions of the 1880 Congress.

It would appear, therefore, that Kropotkin certainly played an important part in the development of anarchist communism, and indeed by 1883 had emerged as its chief exponent. For all that, however, the ideas themselves evolved spontaneously out of the bakuninist collectivism in Italy, Switzerland and Spain, largely independently of each other, at least in the early stages. In fact, although he always insisted on the necessarily intimate connection between theory and practice, Kropotkin was mainly concerned with action at this stage of his career and it was in this area that he probably exercised most influence prior to 1886.

As far as any elaboration of anarchist communist ideas was concerned, Kropotkin did not begin to make any substantial contribution until 1886, when convinced that effective action demanded a further clarification of the anarchist communist view regarding the socialisation of wealth, he wrote the articles on expropriation which were to provide the basis for *The Conquest of Bread* (1892).

As early as 1881, when he rejected the pleas for a united front of socialists of different streams, he had insisted on the need for anarchist communists both to identify with the struggles of the people and to present a clear exposition of their ideals to help the masses elaborate their common aim and the methods needed to achieve it. From 1886, haunted by misgivings about the success of the coming revolution in the face of the growing influence of parliamentary socialism and the failure of the anarchists effectively to challenge that influence, Kropotkin focussed his attention, with his usual thoroughness, on the task of promoting the clarification of popular ideals. On the one hand, he continually urged anarchists to get involved in popular stuggles; on the other he expounded the necessity for, as well as the practical possibility of, creating an anarchist communist society in works such as *The Conquest of Bread* and *Fields, Factories and Workshops*.

Whilst very much opposed to the provision of blueprints for the transformation of society, he did think discussion of how the society of the future might be organised constituted a major factor in the revol-

utionary process:

> It is often said that plans ought not to be drawn up for a future society . . . On the other hand, it is necessary to have a clear idea of the actual concrete results that our communist, collectivist or other aspirations might have on society. For this purpose we must picture to ourselves these various institutions at work. Where do we want to get to by means of the Revolution? We need to know this. There must, therefore, be books which will enable the mass of the people to form for themselves a more or less exact idea of what it is they desire to see realised in a new future.[74]

In 1891, he criticised Grave and other purists in the French movement who, during the eighties and early nineties, opposed the very idea of holding congresses because it was thought to be evocative of parliamentary politics where decisions emanated from the centre instead of from the base. Although he did not think delegates should make decisions binding on their local groups, Kropotkin had come to see meetings and congresses as an opportunity for overcoming disunity and developing solidarity through frank, direct discussion. At the end of the day, of course, he expected everyone to agree on the principle of consumption according to need, *la prise de tas*.[75]

Although impressed by the way the Spanish and Italian Federations, in contrast with the French, had established effective revolutionary organisations amongst the masses, he did not agree with leading anarchists in those movements who urged the avoidance of precise formulas regarding either tactics or the form of distribution of the products of labour. Believing as he did that the coming revolution had no hope of success unless it was an anarchist communist one, he clearly could not go along with Mella who argued that to want to establish in advance of the victory of anarchy how the people should organise distribution was to dogmatise blindly and, worse still, both to destroy the anarchist principle and to deny the revolution. By the same token he looked for a full commitment to anarchist communism rather than the *anarchie sans objectifs* advocated by Tarrida del Marmol. With regard to Italy, he was critical of the efforts of Malatesta and Merlino which resulted in the anarchists and their sympathisers at the Congress of Capolago in 1891 deciding to establish an anarchist socialist revolutionary party organised along libertarian lines and committed to an essentially anarchist, though not specifically anarchist communist programme. For all that, it was this very congress which encouraged him to make a plea for more congresses and meetings at which anarchists and anarchist sympathisers like Cipriani could meet to discuss their ideas, in the belief that such occasions afforded a much better oppor-

tunity for a frank and constructive discussion than that provided by the columns of a journal.

Kropotkin, however, did not take kindly to criticism of his ideas. When Merlino wrote 'Individualisme dans l'anarchie' in *La Société Nouvelle* of Brussels in November 1893, an article which contained a critical examination of the ideas of anarchist communists as well as those of individualist anarchists, Kropotkin responded with a short, rather general discussion of objections to anarchist communism without giving any detailed consideration to the points raised by Merlino; indeed, he actually refused the latter's request to continue the debate with him in the pages of *Le Révolté*.[76] Nevertheless, in 1910, convinced that only after the destruction of the state would the majority of the people adopt anarchist communist ideas and be able to find the means of solving the great problems of economic equality, he was less optimistic about the realisation of anarchist communism in the first twenty-four hours of revolution in the wake of the difficulties faced by insurrectionists in Russia in 1905 and in Spain in 1909.[77]

There was perhaps a certain moderation evident in Kropotkin's position during this latter part of his life in his response to developments in England. Dismissive like all anarchists of anything that smacked of palliation and always critical of the idea of trying to establish anarchist communities in the midst of a capitalist society, he nevertheless saw in the cooperative movement evidence of a growing idea amongst the workers that they should take the organisation of industry into their own hands – the aims of many people in the movement, he argued, were not to have a few shillings during the year but to take over all industry from the capitalists. Similarly, adopting what looks very like a return to the communalist ideas of Brousse in the late seventies, he argued that popular expropriation of all wealth by local communities was the logical and necessary outcome of the attempt of cities to organise such things as tramways and gas and water supplies.

The skill and eloquence with which Kropotkin developed his ideas certainly seem to have secured a general acceptance for anarchist communism in the anarchist movement during the nineties. And Nettlau, if he found little sympathy for his advocacy of a less rigid approach in the 1890s, found everyone against him when he raised the issue for the last time at the beginning of 1914. By now, however, interest and debate centred on revolutionary syndicalism – a movement with which Kropotkin sympathised but which evoked his criticism because it envisaged trade union groupings as the basis of organisation in the free

society of the future. In his opinion the vision of Pouget and Pataud, even though it reflected anarchism in ideas regarding both production and exchange as well as anti-hierarchical forms of organisation, was not truly anti-statist because it involved the syndicalist movement taking over the functions of the state.

As regards government and authority, Kropotkin, in response to the situation in Russia, did adopt a less extreme position. For example, at a meeting of Russian anarchists in 1904 we find him, in spite of his criticism of the constitutionalist agitation in Russia, arguing that anarchists should not be diverted from pursuing their own revolutionary goals by trying to sabotage the activities of the liberals. In 1917 after his return to Russia, he went so far as to make a speech proposing the setting up of a republic modelled on the American Federal system, at a national conference called by Kerensky. For all that, his position generally speaking remained uncompromisingly anti-statist. Totally committed to the communist ideal and convinced that it could only be realised through the destruction of the state, his position had actually hardened in the face of the growing influence of the German Social Democratic Party and the congresses of the Second International which widened the gulf and created increasingly bitter relations between anarchists and state socialists. In 1891, in a pamphlet *La mort de la nouvelle internationale* he accused the social democrats of betraying the ideas of the First International as expressed by Marx as well as Bakunin, by abandoning the economic struggle and entering into collusion with the bourgeoisie as a result of their preoccupation with the conquest of political power. At the same time in 'Revolutionary Studies' he dismissed the attempt of the German Social Democratic Party in the Erfurt Programme to clear themselves of such an accusation. In his view the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat was simply a rather nasty variation of the authoritarian theme of the blanquists.[78] In the years leading up to the Great War we find him accusing the social democratic movement both of helping to corrupt the minds of a whole generation in Germany and of undermining the idea of a genuine international socialism in Europe since 1870. In contrast with the anti-war position adopted by the main body of the anarchist movement he ended up by urging support for the allies against Germany in 1914 to halt the spread of the canker of German imperialism which, he claimed, had infected virtually the whole nation and would destroy the prospect of revolution in Europe for generations.

PART II

Kropotkin and the development of anarchist ideas of revolutionary action by individuals and small groups

3

Revolutionary action and the emergent anarchist movement of the seventies

Manifestly, the anarchists, in denouncing the idea of the formation of a workers' party committed to involvement with parliamentary politics and political action, had to have a real alternative beyond pure abstensionism and revolutionary rhetoric about popular revolutionary action. In the seventies, they faced two major threats to the credibility of the anti-statist, anti-political position, when it came to transforming theory into action. On the one hand, there was the increasing influence on the European socialist movements of the German social democrats, arising out of the latter's success in building up enough popular response to secure an increasing number of seats in the Reichstag under, and in spite of, a repressive régime. On the other, there was the disillusionment of revolutionary socialists like Malon, Brousse and Costa who, disheartened by the failure of their efforts to provoke popular revolt, gradually abandoned anarchism for parliamentary forms of socialism, partly because they shared the guesdist fear that bourgeois radicals would use the political platform to draw workers away from socialism, and partly because they began to believe that some progress towards socialism could be made through parliamentary institutions.

The policy the anarchists developed in response to all this tended to alternate between revolutionary trade unionism and acts of revolt by individuals and small groups. The two types of action and Kropotkin's role in their development will be examined and followed through in two separate sections. The present section will deal primarily with the latter forms of action which were associated with the notion of propaganda by deed and developed out of the failure of insurrectionary action in the first half of the seventies.

In 1873, after the bitter debates that had rent the first International, Bakunin was particularly insistent on the need for revolutionary action

rather than any further theoretical discussion, and he saw that action in terms of organising practical and militant working-class solidarity in the labour movement in preparation for revolution.

Very well. It is my conviction that the time for major theoretical statements, written or spoken, is past. Over the last nine years, more ideas have been developed in the International than would be needed to save the world if ideas alone could save it, and I defy anyone whatever to invent a new one.

The time for ideas has passed; it is now time for deeds. What matters above all to-day is the organisation of the forces of the proletariat . . .

You must build up, ever increasingly, the international, practical and militant solidarity of the workers in every trade of all countries, and remember that, however infinitely feeble you may be as individuals, localities and isolated countries, you will find an immense, irresistible power in this world community.[1]

It is significant that this exhortation to action appeared in Bakunin's farewell message to the internationalists of the Jura. The Jura Federation, which had successfully initiated the development of the Anti-authoritarian International, had now emerged as the most important centre of the libertarian socialist movement, yet Guillaume and his supporters, whilst denouncing statism and political action, played a moderating role between conflicting groups in the International and remained essentially non-violent in their tactics, preferring to concentrate on oral and written propaganda.

Bakunin had had to look elsewhere – to Spain and Italy – for the sort of development of revolutionary action he thought was needed. He seems to have been particularly optimistic about the possibility of revolution in Spain.[2] Prior to 1873, the Federal Council of the Spanish Federation, in their anxiety to avoid premature confrontation with authority, had actually opposed militant strike action. Anarchists in Andalusia, however, had established a firm base in an aggressive trade unionism, and at the beginning of 1873 initiated militant strikes in the Jerez region which escalated into insurrectionary outbreaks. Meanwhile a series of cantonalist risings shook Spain and, as even Guillaume was constrained to point out, the International could not afford to stand aside from such a ferment. 'The International cannot stand idly by watching the people's enemies contending for power; there comes a moment when the people join in and when the International, that section of the people already organised, becomes the lever of revolutionary action.'[3]

In July, bakuninists at Sanlucar de Barremeda managed to establish a popular government which, even though it only survived for thirty

days, according to Temma Kaplan, 'stood as a beacon for Cadiz anarchists, just as the Paris Commune remained as a symbol for all European anarchists of what revolutionary community might be'.[4] About the same time the anarchists led by Brousse and Viñas tried to do much the same thing in Barcelona when they attempted to turn a local general strike of textile workers into a popular take-over of the city government – unfortunately the strikers, unlike those of Sanlucar, had no stomach for insurrection and the whole thing failed dismally through lack of support. At Alcoy near Valencia, Albarracin, a leading member of the Federal Council, led a successful revolt to take over the city when striking paper workers clashed with police; in this case the internationalists were only in control until government troops arrived three days later, when a surrender was negotiated. The initiative in the cantonalist risings elsewhere was taken by 'intransigent republicans', but in some places bakuninists did ally themselves with the latter on the grounds that, although the risings were not internationalist, they did have a true socialist character. Such cooperation undoubtedly had been rejected at the outset by the Federal Council and the question remained a matter of controversy in the movement. Bakunin himself seems to have envisaged the necessity of cooperation with sympathetic bourgeois elements in a revolutionary situation:

> What must revolutionary authorities do? We should endeavour to keep them as few as possible; what must they do to spread and organise the revolution? They must not do it themselves by decrees – they must not impose it on the masses but provoke it in their midst. They must not impose any organisation whatever on the masses, but, promoting their organisation, which is self-governing from the bottom upwards, work, by means of individual influence on the most intelligent men in each locality to make it conform as closely as possible to true principles.[5]

The action of the Spanish bakuninists, therefore, seems to have been very much in keeping with Bakunin's own approach.

The cantonalist movement, however, ended in disaster. Alliance with the intransigents did nothing to advance the internationalists' cause, whilst the military government established at the beginning of 1874 crushed the revolts and directed a programme of savage repression against the International. Bakunin was bitterly disappointed declaring, 'These events in France and Spain had been a blow to our hopes and expectations.'[6] The movement now could only survive as a clandestine organisation. A secret congress was held in Madrid in June 1874 which responded to repression with a call for terrorist tactics.

From this day forth, and until our rights are recognised or the social revolution has triumphed, every exploiter, every idler, living by unearned income, every capitalist parasite and hedonist who, confident in the impunity promised him by the State, commits a grave offence against us or violates our rights will fall under the blow of invisible arms, and his property will be set on fire to prevent the legal heirs profiting from our justice.[7]

There does not seem to be any clear evidence that these words of the Federal Commission were ever more than anguished and angry rhetoric. In fact, the rank and file of the movement concentrated their efforts on maintaining their organisation in the face of repression. The terrorism which developed at this period, where it was not a spontaneous popular response to oppression, probably owed more to the activity of independent groups than to that of bakuninists in the International.

Meanwhile bakuninists elsewhere were convinced that a revolutionary situation existed in Italy. Bakunin in fact directed his attention to Italy rather than to the Jura or Spain during the last years of his life. In 1873, he wrote enthusiastically about the revolutionary potential of the Italian proletariat in *Statism and Anarchy*; he argued that in Italy a social revolution was imminent against which there could be no resistance because of the existence there of a really poor proletariat which, united in desperation and inspired by a passionate idealism, knew what it wanted and what had to be done to achieve emancipation.[8]

Economic conditions for both workers and peasants were very bad at this time. The people were disillusioned with the failure of Victor Emmanuel's government to improve the conditions of the poor, and the winter of 1873–74 was marked by strikes and hunger demonstrations. In such a situation, the bakuninists regarded their identification with the people's struggles as imperative. At the Congress of Berne in 1876, Malatesta described the situation in Italy and the internationalists' reaction to it:

In the spring of 1874, a very lively agitation developed in various places in Italy as a result of the fall in wages and the exorbitant increase in the cost of consumer goods. In a great number of places, the shops were attacked and pillaged. The International found itself in the position of having to reject these acts carried out by the people or declare solidarity with them: the latter course was followed. The International could not have acted otherwise: firstly because it would have lost all the practical supporters of the revolution if it had rejected these acts carried out by the people; secondly because the revolution consists far more of deeds than words, and each time the workers rise up in the name of their rights and their dignity, it is

the duty of every revolutionary socialist to declare solidarity with the movement which develops.[9]

During 1874, a secret committee for the Italian Revolution established in the autumn of 1873, made three appeals for popular revolt in its secret journal *Bolletino del comitato italiano per la Rivoluzione sociale*. This culminated in August in the attempts of Costa (with the help of Bakunin) at Bologna, and Malatesta at Castel del Monte (Puglia) to set off a popular insurrection in southern Italy. The attempts failed, and their defeat resulted in government action to suppress the International.

The Italian internationalists, however, were unrepentant: they actually refused to attend the Congress of the International at Brussels in September 1874, declaring that for them the time for congresses was past, and that revolutionary Italy was now concentrating its efforts on following the path it had adopted as the only one which would lead to the triumph of the social revolution.[10] This statement evoked a savage denunciation from the socialists of Zurich who claimed that the exploits of the Italian bakuninists, like those of their colleagues in Spain, had gravely compromised the cause of labour and the revolution.[11] In fact there was considerable sympathy in Italy for the rebels who had defied an unpopular government on behalf of the poor and oppressed, and no jury would convict them.

The trials of 1875 and 1876 had provided a splendid opportunity for making propaganda speeches, and according to Masini, this preaching from the dock proved more effective than any subsequent propaganda for many years after, even though the International had been unable to function as an organisation for almost two years because of the persecution.[12] Once released from prison, the anarchists, apparently with increased popular support, were able to re-establish the organisation of the International, and during 1876 there was a series of regional congresses followed by a national congress near Florence in October in spite of police efforts to prevent it.

It was at this congress that the Italians committed themselves to the form of revolutionary action known as 'propaganda by deed'.

4

Propaganda by deed: the development of the idea

'Propaganda by deed' is a political slogan which today tends to be associated specifically with isolated terrorist acts carried out by a few anarchists in the 1890s. In fact the concept developed in bakuninist circles in the 1870s and from the beginning tended to mean different things to different people.[1]

It is possible that the original inspiration, certainly in the case of the Italians, came from the Neapolitan revolutionary Carlo Pisacan (1818–57). In his *Testamento Politico* (1857), he had written:

> The propaganda by the idea is a chimera, the education of the people is an absurdity. Ideas result from deeds, not the latter from the former, and the people will not be free when they are educated, but will be educated when they are free. The only work a citizen can undertake for the good of the country is that of cooperating with the material revolution; therefore, conspiracies, plots, attempts, etc., are that series of deeds by which Italy proceeds to her goal.[2]

The concept of propaganda by deed which developed in the seventies however did not go quite as far as this in rejecting oral and written propaganda.

Perhaps, therefore, it can be traced back more directly to Bakunin who in 1870 declared: 'Now we all have to embark together on the revolutionary ocean, and henceforth spread our principles no longer by words but by deeds – for this is the most popular, the most powerful and the most irresistible form of propaganda.'[3] In Spain, bakuninists involved in the risings of 1873 developed this idea. The following extract on revolutionary propaganda, written by Brousse, appeared in *La Solidarité Révolutionnaire* in Barcelona in July 1873.

> Revolutionary propaganda is made not only by the pen and the spoken word, by books pamphlets, public meetings, and newspapers, it is above all made in the

open, in the midst of the piled-up paving stones of the barricades, on days when the exasperated people make war on the mercenary forces of reaction . . .

From a socialist point of view, we have arrived at the point of action . . . Let us act, if only from the point of view of propaganda. Perhaps victory will crown our efforts, and if it is martyrdom let us remember that the idea does not perish by the sword, does not fall beneath bullets. Let us never forget that it is the blood of the people which nourishes and makes fertile the ground of Revolutions.[4]

Francisco Tomás, one of the leading internationalists at Alcoy, made a statement very much in the same spirit in his letter published in the *Bulletin* 17 August 1873:

The cantonalist movement having failed, and the bourgeois believing that our Association has been the soul of it, it is very probable that the persecutions against the International will take on an increasingly relentless character . . . I do not think that anything is lost. On the contrary, our hopes are higher than ever, the revolutionary idea makes new progress every day, and what has just happened will serve as education to strengthen our organisation and prepare us better for the coming struggle.[5]

Quite clearly, Bakunin's idea which had been essentially that of rousing the masses into action by example had been modified by the sharp experience of bakuninist involvement in the cantonalist risings in Spain.[6] Brousse and Tomás had had to face up to the question of the effectiveness of acts of rebellion which had actually been crushed. Tomás simply seems to have thought that the internationalists were succeeding in getting over their idea of popular revolt and that they would do better next time. Brousse, on the other hand, went further – he seems to have been much more preoccupied with the notion that revolts which did not have much immediate hope of success might well be very effective in propagandising socialist principles. In his article, he also pointed out that people had to react to revolutionary action in a way they did not to a book or a paper, and he cited the Commune of Paris as an illustration of how revolutionary action had publicised an ideal in spite of defeat.

A social upheaval like that of the Paris Commune does not leave any worker indifferent. You have to hunt around for a book, you have to buy a newspaper, but revolutionary action comes right into your own home, into the midst of the family, and forces itself on your attention. Who is not forced to reflect when faced with the terrible questions raised in the public arena?

It was in 1848 that Proudhon started his propaganda revolving round the federal idea. Who in France knew what the communalist Republic was, who wanted it, when the 18 March movement broke out? A few men only. Who to-day, now that the communalist question has been raised in the full glare of daylight, has reached

the Hôtel de Ville, and has its heroes and martyrs, would dare to admit that he does not know about it? Everyone has taken sides for or against. Two months of fighting have done more than twenty-three years of propaganda.

Meanwhile there was a similar development of the concept of revolutionary action in the Italian Federation. An article in the first number of a clandestine journal, the *Bolletino del comitato italiano per la Rivoluzione sociale* which appeared in Jaunary 1874, declared: 'The time for peaceful propaganda has passed; it must be replaced by resounding – solemn propaganda of insurrection and barricades.'[7]

This of course was simply an echo of Bakunin's earlier statement. But experience of insurrectionary activity that year at Bologna and the government repression that followed led the Italians, in 1876, at the Secret Congress of Florence to adopt a view of revolutionary action very similar to that which Brousse had already outlined in 1873.[8]

Malatesta and Cafiero sent a letter to the Jura Federation at the end of the year in which they declared:

the Italian Federation believes that the insurrectional act which is intended to affirm socialist principles by deeds, is the most effective means of propaganda and the only one which, without deceiving and corrupting the masses, can penetrate down to the deepest levels of society attracting the living forces of humanity into the struggle carried on by the International.

Guillaume has given the following explanation of this statement in his history of the International:

Our friends in Italy came to the conclusion that, in their country at last, *oral and written propaganda were not enough*, and that, to be clearly understood by the popular masses, especially the peasants, it was necessary to *show* them what could not be made living and real in any theoretical teaching, they had to be taught socialism through *deeds* so that they could see, feel and touch it. A plan was formed for teaching the Italian peasants, by means of a *practical lesson*, what society would be like if it got rid of government and property owners: for this, it would be enough to organise an armed band, large enough to control the countryside for a brief time and go from one commune to another carrying into effect *Socialism through action* before the very eyes of the people.[9]

Much like Brousse after the defeat of the cantonalist movement in Spain, the Italians were asserting for socialism the propaganda value of the insurrectionary act. But unlike him, they were less preoccupied with the idea of defeat and martyrdom. After all, they had transformed their defeat into a limited victory – the popular sympathy they had managed to evoke at their trials had secured their acquittal and enabled them to re-establish their organisation in the face of

repression. Moreover, the Italians, for all their advocacy of insurrectional acts as a method of propagandising socialist ideas, still expected to stimulate a general uprising by such acts. And, in fact, the rising of Benevento in April 1877, which followed the adoption of propaganda by deed at the secret Congress of Florence in 1876, was planned as a revolt which, even in defeat, would hopefully inspire a popular revolution. Ceccarelli, one of the leaders with Cafiero and Malatesta, pointed this out in a letter to Cipriani:

> We could not hope to win, since we knew that a few tens of individuals armed with almost unserviceable rifles cannot win battles against regiments armed with Vetterlys. Partisans of the propaganda of deeds, we wanted to commit an act of propaganda; persuaded that the revolution must be provoked, we committed an act of provocation . . . We were a band of rebels destined to provoke an insurrection, [a band] that cannot and must not count on anything but the echo it might find in the populations.[10]

They were apparently convinced that sympathy evoked after their defeat at Bologna meant that their acts of revolt, even if suppressed, could both teach socialist ideals to the people and lead to a popular revolt. For all that, they did claim afterwards that a revolution could have developed out of their efforts: 'We had faith in popular instincts and in the development of the revolution: and our hopes would not have been deceived, if we had succeeded in holding the countryside for a few months.'[11]

However, neither the revolt (which involved the occupation of two communes and the destruction of their tax records in the name of the social revolution) nor its defeat at Benevento turned popular sympathy into socialist conviction and revolutionary action. The people in general reacted in the same way as the peasants at Benevento who had admired the action of the insurgents but had been too afraid to follow their example.

The savage repression of the International which followed the defeat of Benevento evoked severe criticism from the legalist socialists of the north. Malon (a communard who enjoyed considerable influence in the Lombard Federation) even accused the anarchists of being *agents provocateurs*, for 'to act in such a manner one must be downright insane,' he declared. 'No one will question how much harm these parasites of labour masquerading as internationalists have done'.[12]

This condemnation did not deter the Italians, and they decided on a general insurrection of the whole Italian Federation at their congress which met secretly at Pisa in 1878. This decision seems to mark a return

to insurrectionary tactics without propaganda by deed – but the movement was actually too preoccupied with resisting suppression to start a popular revolution.

Meanwhile the publication of the Italian idea of propaganda by deed in the Bulletin of the Jura Federation on 3 December 1876 had attracted the attention of Paul Brousse. The latter, who had settled in Switzerland after government repression had obliged him to leave Spain in 1873, had succeeded in creating a lively propaganda section of the International at German-speaking Berne. The *Arbeiter Zeitung*, the newly established journal of the group, published an article on 16 December (that is, barely two weeks after the Italian statement had appeared in the *Bulletin*) which advocated propaganda by deed as the principal method of propaganda. 'We are primarily supporters of propaganda by the deed, of propaganda through action, always provided of course that this be treated seriously and not in an infantile fashion.'[13] Quite clearly, the Italians had reminded Brousse of the idea he had expressed in 1873 and he now looked to ways of developing it to apply to the situation in Switzerland. But for all the liveliness of the group in Berne, enthusiasm for the International had faded and the Jura Federation was in decline. There was little hope of initiating any real insurrectionary action, and Brousse hardly wanted a repetition of the fiasco at Barcelona. He seems, therefore, to have abandoned the notion of the insurrectionary deed and advocated another form of action, namely a demonstration which even though provocative was not insurrectionary. And in doing this he was probably influenced more by recent developments in Russia than by the Italians. Indeed, it is significant that Costa, the Italian with whom Brousse was to become most closely associated in advocating propaganda by deed later in 1877, had already begun to waver in his commitment to the insurrectionary deed. In an open letter to Nicotera in January, Costa declared that a vast propaganda of socialist principles among the masses to promote a popular revolution, was an idea that could not be reconciled with the 'necessarily restricted circle of conspiracy' and although his sympathies remained very much with Malatesta, Cafiero and Ceccarelli, he was to avoid taking an active part in the Benevento rising.[14]

But we must now return to the question of Russian influence on the evolution of Brousse's concept of propaganda by deed. At a private meeting in February 1877 Brousse persuaded the Jurassians of the Courtelary section to call on the support of the Jura Federation for a

demonstration at Berne on 18 March on the occasion of the anniversary of the Paris Commune. The previous year's demonstration by the social democrats had been attacked and dispersed and the red flag torn up; Brousse, therefore, argued passionately in favour of a special demonstration at Berne in 1877 in revenge for this, where the red flag would be carried and defended against all attacks. Declaring that a similar demonstration would have a major importance for the future of the International in the federal capital, he angrily dismissed Guillaume's contention that it was wrong to run the risk of losing any human life for the sake of a simple demonstration.

There are obvious similarities between the projected demonstration in Berne and events which took place at St Petersburg in December 1876.

In Russia, the repression of the loosely organised Chaikovskist 'go to the people' movement of the early seventies had been followed by the emergence of a new type of secret organisation. The Zemlya i Volya as it was called, was made up of dedicated revolutionaries carefully organised in small disciplined groups to propagandise the masses by word and above all by deed. 'Our demands can only be secured by means of a violent revolution. The methods to prepare this and bring it about are, according to us: *Agitation* – to be carried out both by word and above all by deed – aimed at organising the revolutionary forces and developing revolutionary feelings.'[15] As a part of this programme of agitation the Zemlya i Volya had been trying to organise the workers of the towns and this had been done with some success in St Petersburg. In the spring of 1876, a spontaneous demonstration in this city on behalf of one of the revolutionaries who had died in prison, had encouraged the revolutionaries to think in terms of organising some sort of public demonstration. On 6 December, students and workers had gathered to demonstrate outside Our Lady of Kazan Cathedral. One of the students, displaying the red flag of 'land and liberty' for the first time, had spoken in memory of those who had suffered for the people's cause and proclaimed the solidarity of the demonstrators with them. Many participants had been arrested. The savagely repressive measures that followed this demonstration had aroused considerable public sympathy for the revolutionaries. Meanwhile, feeling among the Jurassians in favour of the Russian demonstrators was strong – particularly in view of the fact that the St Petersburg demonstration had been condemned by the German social democrats. Moreover, a protest signed by twelve Russian exiles which appeared in the *Bulletin* on

25 March ended with the following statement: 'We know that the demonstration of St Petersburg has not been without results, and that, organised at the express demand of many workers, it has drawn new revolutionaries into the socialist ranks who, coming from within the working class, will double and treble the number who will be called to replace those who have succumbed heroically in this affair.'[16]

Evidently the demonstration was seen as a successful example of propaganda by deed – an example that Brousse thought the Jurassians could emulate. He hoped that the Berne demonstration would show the workers that freedom of expression for socialists had little more reality in ostensibly free Switzerland than it did in autocratic Russia; certainly, he afterwards declared that the demonstration had been an act 'to prove to the Swiss workers that they do not have the freedom to demonstrate'.[17] Moreover, he seems to have expected an echo of the repressive response of the tsarist régime in the behaviour of the Bernese authorities which would inspire sympathy and support for the International among the workers. This came out clearly in his argument with Guillaume and, indeed, after the assault on the red flag at Berne in 1876 he had declared: 'The workers' flag has to win its place in the sun and for that we know that it may be necessary for it to be torn and perhaps, alas! holed by bullets.'[18] Nevertheless, preoccupied though Brousse seems to have been with provoking a violent response from the authorities, there was nothing insurrectionary about the demonstration he envisaged and, in fact, demonstrators on 18 March came armed with sticks not guns. To this extent it may be that he was more moderate than the Russians, for some of the organisers of the St Petersburg demonstration half hoped they might spark off some sort of popular revolt. But the one personal link between the Russian and Swiss demonstrations was Plekhanov. The student revolutionary who had played such a dramatic role in Our Lady of Kazan square in December 1876 had managed to escape from Russia, and actually arrived in Switzerland in time to take an active part in the Berne demonstration. And he was to preoccupied with the creation of an organised movement of the workers that he had never liked the idea of the insurrectionary deed; moreover, he was later to break away from the Zemlya i Volya movement rather than involve himself in the policy of terror which developed out of the concept of propaganda by deed in the later seventies. It is perhaps not entirely without significance that Plekhanov identified himself with the Berne demonstration where his fellow revolutionary in exile – Kravchinsky, whose successful assassin-

ation of Mezentsov in 1878 was to pave the way for the terrorist policy of Narodnaya Volya–played an important part in the Benevento rising.

And this brings us to Brousse's response to the Benevento affair. In a manifesto to the French Federation he made it quite clear that there was nothing really insurrectionary for him in this act of propaganda by deed. He maintained in fact that the Benevento rising had been simply a demonstration to teach socialist principles by practical action, since the people were not ready for revolution. 'Why this parade under arms? Did they expect the people to be ready for revolution and did they think revolution possible? Far from it . . . the aim of the demonstration of Benevento was simply propaganda.'[19]

Nevertheless his language remained uncompromisingly revolutionary. The first issue of *L'Avant-Garde*, the journal of the newly revived French Federation launched by Brousse and Kropotkin in June 1877, called for violent action: 'Experience has spoken! Far be it from us to go for the way which is pacific and legal. We are for the violent way which has proved itself! Let us leave the radicals to the pacific twaddle, let us go for the guns hanging on the walls of our attics.'[20] This sort of language, however, was pure rhetoric. The secret Congress of the French International at St-Imier (19–20 August) actually placed propaganda by deed fairly low on its list of propaganda methods. And Brousse, in the same month, wrote an article which reiterated the view he had expressed in the spring.[21]

This piece, actually entitled 'La propagande par le fait', was prompted by socialist condemnation of the demonstrations of Our Lady of Kazan, Benevento and Berne. Brousse recalled how the radicals in France had condemned the insurrectionary attempts of Flourens, Barbès and Blanqui during the last days of the Empire, yet had been glad to share the cake when the Republic had been established, thanks to the popularisation of the republican idea by the first attempts at revolt. Modern socialists were behaving just as shamefully as the radicals had done in the past.

He insisted that those revolutionaries who had taken part in the acts of St Petersburg, Benevento and Berne had been trying to arouse popular consciousness and in this they had succeeded. They had had no illusions that they could succeed in making a revolution. He repeated his earlier declaration that the acts were purely acts of propaganda: 'Did the men who took part in these movements hope to make a revolution? Did they have enough illusions to believe in success? Evidently not. To say that such was their thinking would be not to know them

well, or to know them and to slander them. The acts of St. Petersburg, Benevento and Berne, were quite simply acts of propaganda.' He then went on to discuss the difficulties of getting the socialist message across to the masses who were not really in a position to learn a great deal from the written or spoken word: 'They [peasants and workers] go back to their homes so worn out and tired, that they have little desire to read pamphlets or socialist newspapers: they sleep, go for walks or devote their evenings to the family.' Like the Italians, he declared that it was necessary to show what socialism was in action. He recalled that the communalist ideal had made much more headway among the masses as a result of the Commune of Paris than through the writings of Proudhon.

The demonstrators in St Petersburg had succeeded in arousing popular attention and sympathy. But something more than this was needed, there had to be some sort of teaching to sustain the popular interest that had been aroused. The demonstrators at Berne had succeeded in doing this: their action had shown the people of that city that they had none of the freedom they had believed they had, and they now understood that there could be no real liberty in the face of economic inequality upheld by the state. The insurgents at Benevento had done even better – by taking over two communes they had demonstrated to the people how to treat property and government. He suggested the possibility of doing more than this by starting the collectivisation of both production and consumption in a commune even though the whole enterprise might be crushed. This would be a living act of propaganda: 'The idea will not be written down, put in a newspaper or picture, any more than it will be sculptured in marble, carved in stone or cast in bronze: it will walk in flesh and blood, living before the people.'

Obviously the acts Brousse envisaged were not genuinely insurrectionary in the sense of actually starting a general uprising, and do not really seem to be consistent with the notion of an insurrection to establish free communes advocated in *L'Avant-Garde*. This is underlined by his lack of enthusiasm for the Spanish advocacy of propaganda by deed at the international congresses in August 1877. Undoubtedly, Brousse was not anxious for a real confrontation with the power of the state, and this became increasingly clear in the development of his views during 1878. The Berne demonstration had been very successful in showing that socialism was a force to be reckoned with even if it had frightened away more timorous working-class support. Even

Guillaume recognised this.[22] But prosecutions against participants virtually destroyed the group in Berne, and after serving a month's prison sentence, Brousse began to express some reservations about such action. In a speech of 24 December 1877 he stressed the need for 'serious conditions for propaganda by deed'.[23] At the annual congress of the Jura Federation at Fribourg in August 1878 he seems to have come to the conclusion that propaganda by deed in the form of what he now described, in the words of the Spaniards, as 'insurrectional agitation', might no longer be practicable, and urged the use of the vote as a propaganda tactic.[24] He maintained that the situation in France over the pressure to grant amnesty to imprisoned communards already provided an opportunity for this type of action. As part of their agitation, the socialists were mounting a campaign in favour of Blanqui's candidature for parliament – a candidature which was illegal. Brousse thought that if a constituency could be found where Blanqui would be likely to secure a majority, the anarchists should vote for him, because once elected, the government would invalidate the election thus revealing the reactionary nature of the state.[25] More surprisingly, he also suggested that where there was a commune with a working-class majority, the anarchists should try to get elected in order to create a revolutionary situation by handing over the arable land to the peasants and the communal buildings to the worker. This was obviously a development of his earlier suggestion about taking over a commune as an act of propaganda by deed. In September we find *L'Avant-Garde* applauding the action of Guesde and his friends in pushing ahead with preparations for the Paris Internationalist Congress in the face of a government prohibition, as a form of propaganda by deed in a situation where no insurrectionary action was possible: 'We entirely approve the congress delegates' behaviour. In view of the absolute impossibility of insurrectionary resistance, the firmness with which this legal resistance has been conducted deserves all our sympathy . . . what they have just accomplished may we say to them is plainly and simply, an act of propaganda *by deed* against the State'.[26]

Manifestly the view of propaganda by deed that Brousse was now advocating was symptomatic of his gradual abandonment of the anarchist abstentionist and insurrectionist position. Even so, the Jurassians tentatively accepted Brousse's idea of what was described as the 'destructivist vote' and indeed Cafiero and Michel later embraced the idea of dead candidatures as a form of uncompromising revolutionary action.[27] In fact, Brousse's concept of propaganda by deed, even

though it marked an abandonment of any real insurrectionist approach and even a flirtation with the electoral system, was not necessarily reformist. Being born of frustration about not being able to start a revolution, it could, particularly in the face of savage government repression, develop into terrorism. And this explains why even Brousse himself showed sympathy for the rash of assassination attempts of the late 1870s. As a matter of fact, it appears that he actually regretted that the attempt on the life of Alfonso XII of Spain by Juan Moncasi, a Tarragonese cooper, 25 October 1878 had not succeeded.[28]

In the article 'Hoedal, Nobiling, et la propagande par le fait' which appeared in *L'Avant-Garde* in June 1878 in the wake of attempts on the life of the German Emperor (by Hoedal in May and Nobiling in June) Brousse repeated his argument in favour of action as a powerful form of propaganda and declared the attempts to be examples of propaganda by deed. In his view, however, they were not the most effective form of such propaganda, since as individual acts they could be easily misrepresented and forgotten, unlike a collective act like that of the Commune where any child who knew how to read could see his future in the bloody reflections of the words 'Commune of Paris'. Above all, regicide was not a socialist but republican act of propaganda: 'We did not load Hoedal's pistol or slide the pellet into Nobiling's carbine, because we knew at the outset that regicide is a purely republican act of propaganda, where afterwards it is too easy to misrepresent the intentions of the perpetrators.'[29] By the end of 1878 *L'Avant-Garde* had been suppressed for its sympathetic attitude to assassination, and Brousse was facing trial as the paper's chief editor. Speaking in his own defence, he admitted that the paper had expressed regret at the failure of the attempt against the king of Spain and approval of the executions carried out by the Russian narodniks (Zasulich's shooting of General Trepov in January and Kravchinsky's stabbing of General Mezentsov in August 1876). He insisted, however, that it had not recommended regicide to any of its readers.

What Brousse asserted was, for the most part, true enough. On the other hand, Kropotkin, in a discussion of this period many years later, declared that *L'Avant-Garde* had applauded the acts of Moncasi, Passanante and Hoedal as republican–socialist acts of propaganda by deed which could promote a political revolution which would soon take on a socialist character.[30] In fact, there had been articles in the paper which could have been interpreted as incitement to regicide. For instance, in response to Moncasi's attempt on the life of the king of

Spain, *L'Avant-Garde* declared that whilst it was neither an aim nor a method of the International to kill tyrants, the assassination of Alphonso XII could have rendered a great service to the revolution.[31] Similarly when its press was closed down in December 1878 it was printing an article 'Les Régicides' which Kropotkin tells us contained a paragraph which governments could not forgive. The offending paragraph pointed out that the attempts at regicide had failed because the would-be assassins had been unable to force a way through the royal entourage, and went on to declare that anyone in future who thought that the way to revolution was regicide would throw a bomb into the midst of the courtiers surrounding the king. Neither of these articles was written by Brousse and it may be that they emanated from a more extremist element involved with *L'Avant-Garde*. Certainly there were dissensions in Swiss anarchist circles over the approach of the paper to the question of assassination.

As a consequence of the Berne trial in August 1879, Brousse, Rinke and Werner faced short prison sentences followed by expulsion from the canton of Berne. This meant that the *Arbeiter Zeitung* could no longer survive for these three had borne the main responsibility for producing the paper. With the demise of the *Arbeiter Zeitung* those associated with it inevitably became more closely involved with *L'Avant-Garde* – particularly when the latter became an organ of the Swiss as well as of the French Federation. Rinke and Werner were developing an aggressive propaganda campaign in Germany along with another former member of the Berne group Reinsdorf, and it seems likely that they were becoming more extreme in their views than Brousse.[32]

A few months later when the *Bulletin* ceased publication on Guillaume's departure for France at the end of March 1878, those associated with this paper also became more closely involved with *L'Avant-Garde*. (In fact in June the paper merged with *Le Travailleur* of Geneva to replace the *Bulletin*.)[33] It is difficult to know who they might have been apart from Spichiger.[34] Undoubtedly, however, the editorial group such as it was tended to reflect the moderate approach of what remained of grassroots support from the Jura watchmakers.[35] They obviously had doubts about Brousse's flamboyant and aggressive propaganda tactics, and Guillaume had voiced these doubts in his comment about the Berne demonstration: 'I doubt that with a population like ours, demonstrations of this sort help propaganda.'[36] In July 1877, Brousse himself had referred to the disagreement between the anti-

authoritarians over the question of propaganda tactics. 'Even groups of the same party fight amongst themselves. War between the anti-authoritarian, partisans of theoretical propaganda, and the anti-authoritarians, partisans of propaganda by deed.'[37] Brousse had replaced Guillaume as the dominating figure in the Jura Federation by the end of 1877, but the Swiss bakuninist still seems to have been able to prevent any resolution of the Jurassians at the congresses in the autumn of that year from actually recommending propaganda by deed.

Meanwhile, in June 1878, *L'Avant-Garde* merged with *Le Travailleur* to replace *Le Bulletin.* Brousse and Kropotkin had originally been sharply critical of *Le Travailleur* because of its eclectic approach, and the relationship between the Jura Federation and the Genevan Group of French exiles who produced the paper had not been good.[38] Now however, the difficult situation facing the whole movement had drawn the groups closer together, and at a meeting on 9 June they appear to have established a better relationship with each other.[39]

Inevitably *L'Avant-Garde* had difficulty in coping with such disparate elements, and a statement at the June meeting called for a direction of the paper in keeping with the wishes of the sections. It seems likely that Brousse's article on propaganda by deed which appeared soon after the meeting may well have caused some dissension. By the end of the year there appears to have been some confusion in anarchist ranks over the question of assassination; the more explicitly favourable responses to such action in *L'Avant-Garde* – possibly inspired by the German element – finally provoked a forceful protest from Pindy, a French exile closely involved with Brousse in the revival of the French Federation and the setting up of the paper.[40]

The regicide article was actually written by Schwitzguébel. He was something of a revolutionary syndicalist, so his position was rather different from either that of Guillaume or Brousse. But like them, he was committed to collective rather than individual action and does not seem to have advocated either regicide or assassination in general as a viable tactic. On the other hand his discussion in the article of how such a tactic might be carried out more effectively in the future does suggest a positive interest in the idea. His enthusiasm quickly evaporated, however, in the face of the suppression of *L'Avant-Garde* and the trial and imprisonment of Brousse, for he had already experienced considerable difficulty during the year in finding enough work to support his large family, and imprisonment would have been an economic disaster in his case. He resisted attempts to involve him in the setting up of *Le*

Révolté. In the only article he could be prevailed upon to write for the paper, 'République et monarchie' (*Le Révolté*, 22 February 1879) he underlined the futility of overthrowing monarchies only to replace them with republics. By 1880 he was arguing in favour of limited participation in communal elections.[41]

Schwitzguébel's attraction to regicide was very much a passing phase. But it probably reflected the response from some of the militants who were increasingly frustrated in their attempts to build up a popular movement at a time of economic recession in the face of hostility from the social democrats and government repression, particularly in Germany and even in German-speaking Switzerland. After so many years of struggle, Schwitzguébel, as one of the founder members of the Jura Federation and one of its leading militants, must have been feeling particularly depressed. And as one of the chief editors of *L'Avant-Garde*, he must have been in close contact with the members of the Berne group after the demise of the *Arbeiter Zeitung* – particularly Werner and Rinke who could speak both German and French. Since 1876, Werner and Rinke had been involved with Reinsdorf in developing an aggressive propaganda campaign in Germany as well as in German-speaking Switzerland. They had succeeded in establishing groups in Munich, Berlin and, above all, Leipzig, but their situation was a very precarious one – they were hounded by the police, whilst at the same time involved in a savage polemic with the social democrats. (In 1877 at the Congress of Ghent, Leibknecht had threatened Werner: 'If you dare come to Germany to attack our organisation we will use every means to annihilate you.'[42]) There is nothing in their propaganda to indicate an interest in regicide or assassination in general. It would have been suicidal to have openly propagandised for such an idea in any case. Reports from German propagandists in *L'Avant-Garde* contain no reference to assassination prior to Hoedal's attempt on the life of the Emperor. But they must increasingly have felt the need to develop a way of getting their message across to the people in the oppressive atmosphere of Germany more effective than interrupting social democratic meetings. Rinke and Werner could not have been anything but sympathetic to the attempts of Hoedal and Nobiling on the life of the Emperor.

In his book on anarchism in Germany, Andrew Carlson has actually argued that the stimulus for the assassination attempts came from the German section of the Jura Federation, and that Werner may well have masterminded them.[43] In fact, even the evidence for any close associ-

ation between Werner and either Hoedal or Nobiling is very thin. Nobiling may well have attended much the same social democratic meetings in Leipzig as the anarchists to use the opportunity as they did to put forward his own views, but his interest was concentrated on the social democrats, and although some of the ideas he expressed may have been anarchistic, he had no connections with any anarchist group. The only real evidence of any personal link between Nobiling and Werner cited is a letter in a police archive to Brousse mentioning that Nobiling had applied for membership of the International and declaring that it would be in the best interest of the cause if Nobiling would soon die. Hoedal, on the other hand, according to police reports, was a member of the group built up by Reinsdorf and Werner in Leipzig between 1876 and 1878. Accounts of him in *L'Avant-Garde*, however, deny this.[44] His political affiliations were in fact somewhat confused – for all his apparent association with the anarchist group in Leipzig from the spring of 1877, he continued to work with the social democrats and was expelled from the party only in April 1878. Both Brousse and Kropotkin denied that Nobiling and Hoedal had anarchist connections.[45] The German correspondent of *L'Avant-Garde* even expressed doubts about the efficacy of such action: 'It is possible that the act of Hoedal may be useless – useless in its results even if it had succeeded, useless also as an act of propaganda.'[46] There is no convincing evidence, therefore, to link the German group of the Jura Federation with the assassination attempts in Germany.

Nevertheless, the acts of Hoedal and Nobiling did evoke a sympathetic response from the Jura Federation at the Congress of Fribourg.[47] And in spite of doubts, the German correspondent for *L'Avant-Garde* actually expressed approval for regicide: 'We cannot call the man who wants to get rid of an emperor, even the German Emperor crazy, any more than we called Orsini and Fieschi madmen in France; and then there are *forms of homicide* that we do not condemn and even approve: regicide, the vengeance of the worker against his boss, all these are cases in point.'[48]

There is also another reason for thinking that the German propagandists were attracted by the tactic of assassination. After all, here was a dramatic form of reaction to a repressive régime, which had as its parallel the action of the Russian revolutionaries in killing one General and wounding another during 1878 – action which had been acclaimed without reservation in anarchist circles, for as well as personal associations with the Zemlya i Volya movement through Russian

exiles, the anarchists had a strong affinity with its socialist populist ideas and this inevitably predisposed them to look favourably on any development of tactics in the Russian movement.

The savage repression which had developed in the wake of the St Petersburg demonstration was driving the Zemlya i Volya movement almost inevitably into the path of political terrorism, because they had been unable to establish any substantial grassroots organisation among either the peasants or the workers. The action of Vera Zasulich in shooting the hated General Trepov for a barbarous attack on a prisoner had evoked considerable popular sympathy; and this had encouraged the movement to think increasingly in terms of acts of vengeance, which by August 1878 had resulted in the successful assassination by Kravchinsky of General Mezentsov the head of the Third Section (the secret police). The Russians had planned the assassination with military precision. They had also made their ideals perfectly clear in public statements that had accompanied the acts of Zasulich and Kravchinsky. Here were examples of propaganda by deed which had succeeded just as surely as those of Hoedal and Nobiling had failed, and without them it may be that the German attempts at regicide which had actually alienated public opinion would have discredited the idea of assassination. As it was they seem to have encouraged interest in the tactic as one which could work if carried out in a different way; this is certainly the impression given by Schwitzguébel's article. As a matter of fact by the early 1880s the German anarchists had turned to terrorism in response to the period of severe repression inaugurated by the passing of the anti-socialist law of 1878. Rinke worked with Puekert on *Der Rebell* and Reinsdorf with Most on *Die Freiheit* – anarchist papers circulated in Germany, which advocated a terrorist form of propaganda by deed. Reinsdorf was finally executed in 1885 for his part in an attempt on the life of the German Emperor.

5

Kropotkin and propaganda by deed

Kropotkin never liked the slogan *propaganda by deed*, and did not use it to describe his own ideas of revolutionary action, for, in his view, the deeds of revolutionaries had to be serious and sincere acts of revolt if they were to achieve anything at all. Nevertheless from the very beginning of his revolutionary career, he was just as preoccupied as other bakuninists and anarchists with the necessity of revolutionary action in addition to oral and written propaganda, and he certainly supported the forms of action adopted by the early advocates of propaganda by deed.

Kropotkin's first attempt to outline a policy of revolutionary action appeared in the proposed manifesto he drew up for the Chaikovsky Circle in 1873. By the time he had joined the circle in May 1872 on his return from Switzerland the group was already involved in the production and distribution of illegal socialist literature (*Knizhnoe delo* – the cause of the book) and had begun to engage in oral propaganda among the workers of St Petersburg (*Rabochee delo* – the cause of the workers). Kropotkin had taken part in the *Knizhnoe delo* to the extent of writing the concluding section to Tikhomirov's pamphlet on Pugachev),[1] but his principal and most successful contribution to the work of the group was the role he had played in developing propaganda activity among the workers in the Moscow and St Petersburg factories which began at the end of 1872. The circumstances in which Kropotkin came to produce the proposed manifesto at the end of 1873 are not very clear, apart from the fact that it seems to have been a response to the increasing need to clarify ideas in a group which had no clear-cut ideological position yet had to work out its policy of action under the increasing threat of suppression. Much of the document was a faithful reflection of the views of the group, but there were sections coloured by Kropotkin's essential commitment to bakuninist ideas – a

commitment not shared by the other members of the Chaikovsky circle, who, as has already been indicated were not anti-statists and were not preoccupied with the idea of popular revolt for all their populist and socialist convictions. Consequently, there appear to have been heated discussions about the manifesto. In a letter to Shishko Kropotkin declared that the manifesto was only accepted in the St Petersburg group after 'extremely thunderous discussions especially on the revolutionary points'.[2]

According to Charushin much of the debate centred on Kropotkin's preoccupation with the idea of peasant revolts.

> I remember how at the time of the discussion of the plan of the programme, Peter Alekseevich heatedly defended the idea of an organisation of peasant guards for open, armed action, not for victory (which he of course did not believe in for the near future), but in order to imprint this revolutionary action upon the minds and hearts [of the people] with their blood.[3]

Kropotkin, in fact, seems to have had in mind a plan to unite 'those fragments of the groups which still survived and to found an armed band, even if it contained only a hundred people; to choose some district where memories of Stenka Razin and Pugachev were still alive; and to move towards Moscow, on the way stirring up the peasants against the gentry and local authorities.'[4] The discussion clearly relates to the part of the manifesto which dealt with the question of what immediate action could be taken to promote socialist ideas and the development of revolutionary organisation among the people. In this section of the document Kropotkin argued in favour of helping the local peasant revolt with a clear socialist aim, even though it was not expected to arouse general support to prevent it being crushed by the troops. In this way, he declared, the revolutionists could concentrate their resources on one locality instead of spreading them out throughout the country. Above all, Kropotkin felt that the group could do no better than be involved in a revolt whose savage repression would reveal the true evil nature of the régime, and encourage others to follow the example of the first martyrs, thus preparing for the eventual revolution:

> Let the nobility and the tsar be displayed at least once in all their bestial nakedness, and the rivers of blood spilled in one locality will not flow without consequence. Without the rivers of blood the social upheaval will not be accomplished; subsequent upheavals will replace the first ones . . . perhaps there is no better outcome for us than to drown ourselves in the first river which bursts the dam.[5]

Kropotkin had been perhaps the most successful of the chaikovskists

in evoking a sympathetic response from the workers,[6] but even he had been disappointed by the lack of commitment among the more skilled workers like the engineers which had made it difficult to develop a propaganda network in the factories.[7] He had, in fact, found the less skilled workers like the weavers, who had maintained their contacts with the villages and retained the communalist habits of peasant life, more responsive to populist propaganda.[8] All this had encouraged him to look to the countryside rather than the town, and it was apparently in response to his suggestion that the Moscow section of the Circle decided to direct its propaganda activity to the countryside in December 1873.[9] By the time he came to write the manifesto, he had obviously come to the conclusion that some sort of peasant revolt of a socialist character was a practical possibility. The near success of a plan for a peasant revolt at Chigirin, not far from Kiev, a few years later suggests that the idea was not entirely unrealistic. It certainly makes more sense as revolutionary strategy than the entirely spontaneous and unorganised movement 'to go to the people' by the students in the summer of 1874.

Kropotkin's proposals, coloured though they may have been by bakuninism, were essentially a response to the Russian situation. It is true that the idea of supporting peasant revolt which had no real hope of success seems to reflect something of the response of Brousse and Tomás to the suppression of the cantonalist risings in Spain in the summer of 1873. But it is unlikely that he was influenced by these reactions – in Russia even a revolutionary like Kropotkin, for all his associations with the movement in Western Europe, could have had only a limited knowledge of what was happening elsewhere. The most that can be said is that his proposal reflected an idea that was emerging in revolutionary circles generally in the face of severe setbacks. For example, Irish revolutionaries published the following statement in the *Irish World* in the autumn of 1874:

> We want some band of men to pioneer the way – sometimes to skirmish, sometimes to act as a forlorn hope, sometimes to give martyrs and confessors: always acting, always showing that we have still among us brave men ready to do or dare all that brave men ever did and dared to do for the salvation of a fallen land . . . There must be action and preparation before a revolution, and some little skirmishing too, before the general battle comes on . . . [10]

There does not seem to be a very close relation in fact, between the early notion of propaganda by deed which Brousse articulated in the summer of 1873, and that of revolutionary action expressed by

Kropotkin later that year. Certainly, as Nettlau pointed out, Kropotkin did use the phrase *Faktitcheskaia propaganda* (propaganda through action).[11] But when he argued that immediate action was necessary to rally the people to the revolutionary cause because 'by acting on people not merely by words, but by words and deeds, it was considerably easier to convince them of that which one was oneself convinced', he was simply echoing Bakunin's arguments in *Letters to a Frenchman.* Moreover, it is quite clear that he did not envisage revolutionary action as an alternative method of actually expounding socialist principles as Brousse seems to have done. Kropotkin's proposal relating to local peasant revolt owed just as much to the inspiration of the chaikovskist movement as it did to bakuninism. His comrades might not be prepared to involve themselves in efforts to help organise a peasant revolt but the idea of martyrdom in Kropotkin's proposal reflects the essential spirit of the Chaikovskist Circle – a spirit of total selfless devotion to the people, involving a special sort of private and public morality which expressed itself in the relationships of revolutionaries both with each other and with the peasants and workers.

The chaikovskists had reacted strongly against the elitist organisation and unscrupulous machiavellian methods which had characterised the Nechaev conspiracies. Nechaev, obsessed with the idea of precipitating a revolution, had tried to create a revolutionary organisation run by a central committee and adopting any method however ruthless, to achieve this purpose. In stark contrast with this, the chaikovskists built up a movement whose unity and strength was based on solidarity and trust – a solidarity and trust generated by the remarkable personal idealism of its participants. The chaikovskist ideal of devotion to the people was above all an ethical ideal:

> Undoubtedly every revolutionary movement always contains somewhere within itself some ethical basis, so that from this point of view the movement of the seventies was in no way original. But its special characteristic was that here ethical motives played an exclusive role. People joined together mainly as a result of the intensity of their subjective state of mind and not out of loyalty to this or that revolutionary doctrine.[12]

This comment by Shishko was a characteristic one from those who had been involved in the Circle. Certainly the moral idealism of the chaikovskists made a lasting impression on Kropotkin:

> The circle accepted as members only persons who were well-known and had been tested in various circumstances, and of whom it was felt that they could be trusted absolutely. Never did I meet elsewhere such a collection of morally superior men

and women as the score of persons whose acquaintance I made at the first meeting of the Circle of Tchaykovsky. I still feel proud of having been received into their family . . . The two years I worked with the Circle of Tchaykovsky, before I was arrested, left a deep impression upon my subsequent life and thought. During these two years it was life under high pressure, that exuberance of life when one feels at every moment the full throbbing of all the fibres of the inner self, and when life is really worth living. I was in a family of men and women so closely united by their common object, and so broadly and delicately humane in their mutual relations, that I cannot now recall a single moment of even temporary friction marring the life of our circle.[13]

In Kropotkin's view, it was the moral idealism of the chaikovskists which should provide the foundation of all revolutionary movements:

[The chaikovskists] had judged, quite correctly, that a morally developed individuality must be the foundation of every organisation, whatever political character it may take afterward, and whatever programme of action in the course of future events.[14]

It might be true to say that the chaikovskists influenced Kropotkin more than Kropotkin influenced them. And not only in the narrow sense of personal morality, for insofar as the moral stand of the chaikovskists was reflected in the conduct of the internal affairs of the group, they even set an example of anti-authoritarian organisation which Kropotkin himself found difficulty in living up to. Certainly he declared that there should be 'a rejection within the revolutionary organisation of such relations among people, and such ways of conduct, as directly contradict the ideal for the sake of which they are introduced'.[15] But, in spite of his insistence that there was never the slightest friction in the group, it does seem that in the matter of the manifesto he may have tried to take an initiative unacceptable to some members of the group and even expected a discipline for action inconsistent with its informal and anti-authoritarian character.[16]

And this brings us to the other important facet of the chaikovskist ideal and its influence on Kropotkin – the sort of relationship the chaikovskists endeavoured to establish with the workers and peasants. When Kropotkin urged the necessity of martyrdom it was a special sort of martyrdom where the revolutionaries absorbed themselves in the people's own struggles – 'perhaps there is no better outcome for us than to drown ourselves in the first river which bursts the dam'. And a large part of the manifesto was in fact devoted to explaining in true chaikovskist spirit what the relationship between the revolutionary agitator and the people should be.

Only those whose former way of life, whose previous deeds are wholly of a character which merits the faith of the peasantry and workers will be heeded by them and this will be only the activists of the peasantry itself and those who will wholeheartedly surrender themselves to the people's affairs and prove themselves not with heroic deeds in a moment of enthusiasm, but with all their previous life; those who, having cast off any shade of nobility in life, now will enter into close relations with the peasantry and urban workers, tied by personal friendship and confidence.[17]

Certainly, Kropotkin had been one of those who had spearheaded direct propaganda among the workers and peasants; indeed he had argued in favour of such action against some chaikovskists who, unwilling to face the difficulties involved, would have preferred to continue to direct their propaganda towards students and intellectuals. Such a preoccupation with direct propaganda among the people was of course partly inspired by the bakuninist objective of building up a nucleus of revolutionaries in preparation for action in the revolution. In the manifesto, for instance, he declared that 'the success of the insurrection' would depend on 'the existence among the insurrectionists of a strong, friendly, active group of people who ... must be the focus of the most conscious and decisive forces' of the 'peasants and urban workers'. It also, of course, derived some inspiration from the special respect and regard for the peasants he had developed as a result of childhood experiences and work as an explorer and administrator in Siberia. Nevertheless, when he described the relationship that should exist between revolutionaries and the people, he was undoubtedly describing an idea that had developed in the chaikovskist movement itself, which he had wholeheartedly embraced rather than introduced to them.

The chaikovskist movement clearly exercised a formative influence on Kropotkin's development as a revolutionary, and indeed, the idealism of the chaikovskists continued to influence him long after he left Russia – especially in his view of revolutionary action. Kropotkin's work with the Chaikovskist Circle ended abruptly with his arrest on 22 March 1874, and it was not until 1876 after escaping from prison in St Petersburg that he resumed his revolutionary activities – this time outside Russia. In spite of the fact that at first he hoped to return to his homeland within a few weeks or months, he soon became deeply involved in the development of the anarchist movement in Western Europe. And undoubtedly he was associated with the development of the revolutionary tactic of propaganda by deed. Nevertheless his

chaikovskist idealism soon led him to a different position from that anunciated by Brousse or the Italians.

As we have seen, he rejoined his friends in the Jura in January 1877 after having spent the first few months of exile mainly in London where there was at this time no revolutionary movement. He travelled to Switzerland via Verviers and Paris. The stay in Belgium proved to be a fairly depressing one but he was immensely cheered by the visit to Paris, where the revolutionary movement was beginning to revive after the repression which followed the defeat of the Commune. 'I benefited from action, whole evenings spent in sometimes relentless discussion. There is here that feeling of freedom, of strength, which is lacking in London. I often said to myself . . . at least for a time one can breathe physically and morally, a healthier air than that of London.'[18]

The situation he found on his arrival in the Jura was not really very much more encouraging than that at Verviers, and, indeed, it would appear that bakuninists of both areas now looked to France as the main hope of the anarchist movement: 'France, France, that is the refrain everywhere, in Belgium as it is here.'[19] The Jura Federation had begun to decline. The cooperative workshop at La Chaux-de-Fonds, where Kropotkin settled, had all but collapsed through shortage of work, and a conversation with one of the founder members of the Jura Federation – Spichiger – left him with 'a not very encouraging feeling about things here'.[20] Guillaume acknowledged to Kropotkin that the group at La Chaux-de-Fonds had become very isolated from the population and suggested that he should mix with the workers in their cafés to help overcome this. On 27 February he wrote a somewhat disconsolate letter to Robin:

> As for the position of the *Federation* here, it is 'all but' [i.e. English in text] excellent. All the sections have been reduced to a very small number of members. Here, for example, there are only 10 or rather 8 coming to the meetings . . . This might still be unimportant. The number would not matter if the masses were with them. But this is not the case. They do not have contact with the masses. Worse still they are separated from them as if by a rampart, and my efforts or rather my wish to introduce myself into other circles than that of the 10 have still not led to anything. Amongst the masses, the radicals are the gods of the day. They [the masses] distrust the socialists. A few years of prosperity, with a little penchant for bourgeois luxury which has crept in (on Sunday it is you and I who would be taken for unwashed workers), their charming way of gossiping in the cafés about the theatre, bourgeois weddings etc. – all that distances them from sectarians like us.

Kropotkin was obviously disturbed at the influence of the radicals, and the way the group at La Chaux-de-Fonds had allowed itself to become

isolated from the masses. Moreover there is a clear hint in the letter that his desire to do something about it had not evoked much response. He went on to describe how the group had resorted to methods 'which are not really in the anarchist programme', and reported, without much enthusiasm, how Spichiger would give a speech at the civic celebration of the 1848 revolution to explain the socialist refusal of any alliance with the radical parties: 'We will have an audience of at least 3,000 men, and will at least make them speak about these sectarians.' He clearly thought that Spichiger's speech was a pretty tame tactic for anarchists to adopt. He maintained that there was sympathy for the internationalists among the poorest workers but that fear of losing their jobs prevented them doing anything unless provoked by some fairly dramatic event:

Finally, there is a population which is very poor and miserable – (misery is increasing and soup kitchens are functioning). They sympathise with us. But they are also afraid of us. Work is so hard to get, so hard to get sometimes, and it depends so much on the caprice of the employer [patron], that they are afraid of committing themselves. It needs something like a strike, shootings, perhaps, to get them on the move, even if it is only to provoke some excitement.[21]

Kropotkin, particularly after his experience of the chaikovskist movement, was looking for a more dynamic approach than that of the section at La Chaux-de-Fonds or even that of the Jura Federation in general. It is interesting to note that in marked contrast to Kropotkin's comments to Robin, Guillaume wrote enthusiastically about Spichiger's speech in the *Bulletin*.[22] Kropotkin later admitted that he found the style of propaganda in the *Bulletin* insipid.[23] In fact for all his respect and regard for Guillaume, Kropotkin never really established a very satisfactory relationship with him. Theirs was an enduring friendship but it was always an ambivalent one.[24] It is quite clear from Kropotkin's memoirs that the Swiss bakuninist's personality contrasted uncomfortably with his own.

Small, thin, with the stiff appearance and resoluteness of Robespierre, and with a truly golden heart which opened only in the intimacy of friendship, he was a born leader by his phenomenal powers of work and his stern activity.[25]

Kropotkin was just as resolute and dedicated as Guillaume, but his was a warm and enthusiastic nature, unsympathetic to the sober, humourless and cautious approach of the Swiss bakuninist.

In this situation, it is easy to appreciate Kropotkin's immediate warm and somewhat uncritical response to Paul Brousse. 'On the con-

trary, Brousse whom I saw yesterday, brings more hope and a feeling of strength, above all because of his livelier temperament.'[26] The complete opposite both to Guillaume and Spichiger, he had already succeeded in establishing a lively section of the International with its own paper, the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, in Berne, and now, after a visit to France, was intent upon promoting the revival of the International there by means of a new paper, *L'Avant-Garde*. Kropotkin was excited by Brousse's report of the increasing strength of the revival in France and its development in a purely anarchist direction. He joined enthusiastically in the *Avant-Garde* venture, which both men hoped would promote a more lively propaganda both in France and Switzerland than that offered by the *Bulletin*.[27] Kropotkin also supported Brousse's proposal for the demonstration at Berne in spite of Guillaume's sharp criticism of it. In the letter he wrote to Robin on 27 February 1877, describing the depressing situation in the Jura, Kropotkin concluded with a discussion of this project – a project which for him clearly represented a much more dynamic and appropriate form of action than that of Spichiger at the celebration of the 1848 Revolution.

He explained that the Jurassians were not going to Berne simply to defend the flag of the Internationalists of Zurich, but to prove that they could organise a fight against authority and, at the same time make propaganda before a large crowd.

> It is not the desecrated flag that we are coming to defend, it is to affirm, to prove to people that we are able to come together to show our strength to the population of Berne and make propaganda in front of a large audience. (Last year as a consequence of the battle, we had at least 300 men who came running to see.) As for me, I entirely approve of this way of acting. Certainly, it is a means of propaganda (and to tell you in parenthesis the flag is not for me just a piece of old cloth. In attacking it, they attack us and we have to defend it). In all there are a dozen of us going to Berne. In the evening of 18 March, there will be lectures, and we must believe that the auditorium will not be empty. If the police attack, so much the better. This will be propaganda with blows from truncheons and revolvers, if necessary.

Like Brousse, Kropotkin seems to have seen the Berne demonstration as an emulation of the demonstration of December 1876 in Moscow which was to have similar results. But Brousse's view of the aim of the demonstration was far less positive and direct than that of Kropotkin. The Frenchman later declared that the objective had been simply to show the workers that they had no right to demonstrate in ostensibly free Switzerland.[28] Kropotkin, on the other hand, maintained that the intention had been to show 'that at least here and there the workers

would not have their rights trampled underfoot, and would offer resistance'.[29] Moreover, it is quite clear in declarations prior to the demonstration that Brousse, even though he referred to the possibility of being fired on, envisaged a much less serious confrontation with authority than did Kropotkin: where the latter exhorted comrades to bring revolvers, the former was content to urge them to come armed with sticks.

In the event none of the demonstrators had firearms, although the section from La Chaux-de-Fonds which included Kravchinsky (Lenz) brought a fairly impressive assortment of weapons. Kropotkin, in fact, seems to have been relieved that he and his friends had been unable to secure guns, recognising that the police would have treated them much more savagely had a shot been fired.

For about ten minutes, we struggled in vain with five or six policemen for possession of the flag lying torn on the ground (Pindy, Spichiger, a *Zurichois*, me and my friend Lenz). Fortunately, none of us fired a gun. (Lenz and I did not have one; Kahn had promised to bring one but had not brought it). With only five of us on this spot (everyone else having left beforehand for the meeting) we would have been beaten senseless.

Certainly from the enthusiasm of this letter to Robin a few days after the demonstration, it would appear that Kropotkin was well pleased with the whole enterprise and felt that it had been very successful. 'My opinion, based on that of the German conservatives, is that the bourgeoisie feared a re-volu-tion! . . . In short, the affair has succeeded admirably. Instead of 70 we had 2,000 at the meeting. Instead of indifferent people, we had an attentive and in part sympathetic public. *There is nothing like courage to win over the people.*'[30] A few months later (about the time that Costa delivered his successful lecture on propaganda by deed in Geneva) Kropotkin was apparently preparing a pamphlet on this subject for Russia, which suggests that he associated himself fairly closely with the notion developed by Brousse.[31] On the other hand when Robin, who saw little point in a scuffle with the police where there should have been a real revolutionary battle, insisted that the demonstrators at Berne could have defended the flag more successfully than they had done, Kropotkin felt obliged to agree: 'you are certainly right that it was not necessary to surrender a flag that we should have been able to defend'. The problem, he explained, had been that the Swiss, unused to demonstrations, were not prepared for a battle with the police and had wanted to avoid the sort of serious confrontation that carrying revolvers would imply. 'Moreover,' he added, 'we

have to remember that for the Swiss, retaliation against the police is something supernatural.'[32] It may be that there had been a general feeling amongst the Jurassians against carrying firearms which discouraged either Brousse or Kropotkin from overtly urging their use. Nevertheless, it still remains true that Kropotkin apparently tried to get his friends to procure arms where Brousse did not, and that he envisaged a more violent opposition to authority than the Frenchman had done or that had in fact taken place. It is also significant that in his letter to Robin immediately after the demonstration he had underlined the sentence 'There is nothing like courage to win over the people', and that a few months later (in August) he took part in a smaller demonstration to which he came armed ready to shoot it out had the demonstrators encountered police violence again.[33]

It is clear that Kropotkin always thought in terms of a serious act of revolt, where Brousse probably thought more in terms of a token resistance. Even so, Kropotkin did not at first seem to notice the difference in approach between himself and Brousse – which is not surprising for, as has already been pointed out, the Frenchman delighted in the use of fairly violent language. He perhaps began to recognise it in August 1877, when Brousse produced his article on propaganda by deed for the *Bulletin* – the article from which Kropotkin later firmly dissociated himself. At the time he made no comments about it, although he did express a rather different view of the revolutionary action to that contained in the article, a few days later in his column 'Bulletin International' for *L'Avant-Garde*. In the column, referring to the violent rail-strikes in the States, he attacked the American social democrats for having tried to get their principles across by word when it was time to put them into practice.

> In Chicago, the communists of the social-democratic school tried to spread their principles by the spoken word, when already they should have realised them in deeds. Here is the proof of what we have always repeated, namely that all legal agitation becomes a useless weapon, finds itself adrift, the day when, having tired of waiting, the people revolt.[34]

He maintained that the strikes had been popular acts of revolt which could have been transformed into an insurrection to establish the free commune, and that such a commune even if crushed would at least have remained a very important act of propaganda:

> Suppose that, on the contrary, we had had the good fortune to have anarchist sections of the International Workingmen's Association in America, in the places that have seen insurrection momentarily triumphant? What would have happened?

This: the people having become masters of capital, factories and workshops, would have organised work to profit themselves; as masters of the palaces and bourgeois houses, they would have installed the families of workers in them; they would have created in a word, a 'Commune' as we understand it, which even if it had had to suffer defeat, would remain at least an immensely resounding act of propaganda for socialism.[35]

There is no trace here of the pure act of propaganda. Kropotkin's argument is that anarchists, by being involved with the strikers' protest, could have encouraged the strikers to act along revolutionary anarchist lines. The propaganda effect of a courageous defeat is not seen as the primary motive for involvement in an act of revolt. Kropotkin, with the instinct and commitment of his chaikovskist background, was infused with the idea that heroic self-sacrifice could inspire the people – but only if every such act were a serious act of revolt. This had in fact been clearly illustrated in his response to the first news of the defeat at Benevento where the insurgents had surrendered without firing a single shot:

You can imagine how angry we are with the Italians. Seeing that they have allowed themselves to be surprised and have not defended themselves, I propose to vote for their exclusion from *the International.* The republic of '93 was quite capable of guillotining its generals when they gave proof of ineptitude. In my view, by allowing themselves to be *surprised, to take fright,* and by delivering up their weapons and ammunition *to* 42 men they have acted as cowards.[36]

A harsh judgement indeed which perhaps Kropotkin may have modified when he received Guillaume's letter of 3 June explaining that the insurgents had been unable to use their weapons because heavy rain had made them too damp to fire. Nevertheless it illustrates Kropotkin's conviction that an act of revolt should be a serious act of war – not a dramatic gesture. Writing in 1904 about the situation that had led anarchists to take the action they had done at Benevento and Berne in 1877 Kropotkin declared:

This atmosphere of general reaction was suffocating . . . By one way or another we had to shake off this torpor, and that is why the Italian anarchists decided to undertake the armed revolt of Benevento, whilst in Switzerland the Jurassian internationalists decided to take the red flag to Berne on the 18th of March when we knew that this would mean a serious affray with the police.[37]

In fact, as has already been pointed out, Kropotkin later rejected all association with the idea of propaganda by deed, particularly as it had been expounded by Brousse. In 1909 in response to the publication in *Réveil* (a Swiss Italian Anarchist newspaper) of Brousse's piece on

propaganda by deed under his name, he wrote two letters to the editor Georges Herzig hotly denying he had anything to do with the article.

He (Brousse) was so proud of this word 'propaganda by deed' . . . I have so little liked the word that in all my writings it is not encountered more than once – if at all. Nothing good can be done if the motive is as theoretical as that – a desire for propaganda. The Band of Benevento, demonstration of Berne, all that, *without the spirit of revolt* could only be a game. I am sure that the sortie with the red flag at St-Imier (at the time of the Jurassian Congress) there was only old Jeallot and me, with my loaded revolver, decided to blow out the brains of anyone who touched the flag. Albagès, who could not understand how one could fight for fun, did not wish to come at all either to Berne or to St-Imier. For the others it was . . . propaganda by deed.[38]

Basically, the evidence seems to support Kropotkin's claim that he had never really subscribed to the notion of propaganda by deed as expounded by Brousse, although the close association which developed between the two revolutionaries during 1877 tended to obscure this fact at first. On the other hand the suggestion that the action both at Berne and Benevento might only have been a game because demonstrators had not taken the whole thing seriously enough is not altogether fair. The comment about the demonstration at St-Imier (which was an attempt to repeat action taken at Berne) is in fact inconsistent with Kropotkin's own account in his memoirs.

The Berne government prohibited the carrying of the red flag anywhere in the canton; and the Jura Federation thereupon decided to carry it, in defiance of the prohibition, at St-Imier, where we held our congress that year. This time most of us were armed, and ready to defend our banner to the last extremity . . . But when our column appeared in the square, and it was judged from its aspect that aggression would result in serious bloodshed, the mayor let us continue our march, undisturbed, to the hall where the meeting was to be held. None of us desired a fight; but the strain of that march in fighting order, to the sound of a military band, was such that I do not know what feeling prevailed in most of us – relief at having been spared an undesired fight, or regret that the fight did not take place.[39]

Kropotkin and Jeallot may have been the only ones ready to shoot to kill at St-Imier but the other demonstrators were ready to put up more serious resistance to attack than they had done at Berne. And this is borne out by a letter Brousse wrote to Kropotkin on 10 July in which he made a request for clubs to arm the Berne contingent: 'Order to Pindy 20 clubs for Berne.'[40] Undoubtedly, Kropotkin's distress in 1909 at the reappearance of the 1877 article on propaganda by deed under his name, led him to make a sharper distinction between his own

approach and that of Brousse than actually existed in the early days. Nevertheless, the distinction clearly did exist.

In fact in the autumn of 1877 the Spanish Federation was expressing a view of propaganda by deed which seems to be closer to Kropotkin's position with regard to propaganda and revolutionary action. The Spanish delegation raised the issue of propaganda by deed at the Congress of the International at Verviers, and at the Universal Socialist Congress at Ghent in September. At Verviers, they urged the discussion of 'the proper means to realise revolutionary socialist action as quickly as possible', on the grounds that they wanted to know if other federations of the International would support them in their recent commitment to propaganda by deed.[41]

> Morago gives some explanations on the meaning of the question. The line of action taken in Spain is propaganda by deed and separation from all bourgeois organisations. The proposal was made to ascertain the opinion of the federations on this form of action and to find out if in the case of action, the Spanish federations would have the support of others.[42]

Costa supported the Spanish proposition. The Spanish delegation nevertheless agreed to drop it on the understanding that all revolutionary socialists had already agreed to support each other in revolutionary action, and that the question of tactics would be covered by other questions already on the agenda.[43] The Congress finally agreed on a resolution rejecting all party political action and on a declaration of solidarity with the revolutionary action taken at Benevento, St Petersburg, Berne and in the United States.[44] At Ghent, the Spaniards put forward a more explicit proposition, which they had been mandated to present by their federation, to the effect that insurrectional agitation by deed and propaganda was necessary to bring about the social revolution.[45] Anxious to restore some sort of unity in the socialist ranks, delegates wanted to avoid such a controversial issue as that of propaganda by deed, and the vast majority of them took no part either in the debate or the vote on the Spanish proposal. The Spanish delegation had to content themselves with supporting the more general resolution against political action drawn up by the Jurassians.

The evidence – such as it is[46] – suggests that at the Verviers and Ghent Congresses, the Spaniards were putting forward a fairly straightforward insurrectionist view of propaganda by deed, where it was a question of supplementing oral and written propaganda by acts of revolt to encourage the people to rebel. Unlike Brousse, they did not see propaganda by deed as a possible substitute for oral and written

propaganda – after all, under the repressive régime in Spain the latter was just as much a form of insurrectional agitation as the former. It is perhaps significant that Brousse does not seem to have lent his support to the points raised by the Spanish delegation. This may have been for tactical rather than ideological reasons. Tension was building up between himself and Guillaume, and it may be that in order to ensure a united anarchist front, it was necessary to avoid explicit reference to propaganda by deed to reassure the moderates.

It is difficult to know how Kropotkin reacted to the Spanish approach, for there is no evidence that he took part in the discussions relating to propaganda by deed at the Congresses of 1877. It is possible that he did not want to discuss a topic about which he had serious reservations. However, if his comment about Albarracin's (Albagès') reaction to the demonstrations at Berne and St-Imier are anything to go by, he must have recognised in the Spanish approach a view of revolutionary action much closer to his own than that of Brousse and Costa. He was, in fact, developing a fairly close association with the Spaniards at this stage which was to culminate in his spending six weeks in Spain in the summer of 1878. He had made friends with Albarracin (the exiled leader of the famous revolt in Alcoy who had settled in La Chaux-de-Fonds),[47] and in June, when the latter finally returned to Spain, Kropotkin had only been dissuaded from going with him by arguments of Guillaume to the effect that a foreigner who could not speak Spanish could do little to help the movement there. In August Viñas had stayed with Kropotkin on the occasion of a special meeting of *L'Intimité Internationale* at La Chaux-de-Fonds – a meeting at which a special office had been established in Switzerland with Kropotkin as corresponding secretary.[48]

Whatever his reaction to the approach to Brousse and that of the Spaniards, Kropotkin apparently felt the need to develop and clarify his own ideas in the light of the discussions and actions of revolutionaries in 1877. On arrival in London after his hurried departure from Ghent, he took the opportunity of studying the French Revolution at the British Museum: 'In the admirable collections of the British Museum I studied the beginnings of the French Revolution – how revolutions come to break out.'[49] His longing for action soon drew him to Paris, but he continued his studies at the Bibliothèque Nationale until the increasing danger of arrest obliged him to leave the country in May 1878. His reading confirmed ideas he had begun to formulate in 1873 and 1877 – namely that preliminary acts of revolt were necessary

before a full-scale revolution could take place, and that the course of the revolution would be influenced by the ideas of those who had helped and encouraged the first acts of revolt.[50]

After spending a few weeks with Brousse in Switzerland, Kropotkin left for Spain where some of the revolutionaries expected an outbreak of social revolts as a consequence of the country's serious economic crisis. It seems likely that this visit had something to do with the letter from the Spanish correspondent in *L'Avant-Garde* on 20 May which indicated the possibility of dramatic developments in the Spanish Federation: 'We hope to enter a new phase which will show better than the spoken and written word that socialism is not dead.'[51]

Apart from a week in Madrid, Kropotkin spent his time in Spain with Viñas and the Internationalists in Barcelona. He was received with considerable warmth by the Spanish movement, and the Federation entrusted him with the task of effecting a reconciliation between Viñas and Morago. The two leading internationalists had quarrelled over tactics, for where the group in Madrid thought primarily in terms of individual and more or less terrorist acts that in Barcelona favoured collectivist action.

> According to him [Kropotkin], a real breach had occurred at this time between Madrid and Barcelona. In the latter town the labour movement predominated, in the former some people with more or less terrorist projects. In Barcelona, they were also in contact with the peasants from the region of Valencia, and a march of rebel peasant populations on Barcelona was one of the possibilities discussed; in Madrid, the militants were thinking of individual acts. Between Viñas and Morago there was an open breach: Kropotkin, who spent a week in Madrid, was employed as a member of the International Alliance to bring about a reconciliation, and he said that he had succeeded.[52]

The fact that Kropotkin played a conciliatory role in this situation suggests that he sympathised with, and supported the tactics of, both groups. It may be that in the light of his studies of the French Revolution and the recent acts of attempted assassination in Germany and Russia, Kropotkin had expanded his concept of revolutionary action to include attacks on oppressors which were not primarily collective and insurrectionist.[53] He certainly listened very sympathetically to the Spanish Internationalists in general, for he was tremendously impressed and inspired by the strong revolutionary spirit of the movement in Spain:

> He returned from Spain filled with enthusiasm by what he had seen of the workers' organisation there, penetrated by the revolutionary spirit, so different from the

spirit of trade unionists, hoping for the agrarian revolt that he saw smouldering in Spain and which appeared to him nearer and more determined than the revolt of the Russian peasants. He had seen very little revolutionary vigour since his arrival in the West in 1876 in the Jura and in Belgium; and nothing at all of the spirit in England; he did not have any experience of Italy. The visit to Spain was therefore for him truly a journey into the land of the International, which was alive in spite of its clandestine character, and the journey helped to give him increasing fervour from 1879 to 1882.[54]

Kropotkin, it seems, was more enthusiastic about the revolutionary movement he found in Spain than anywhere else except France – even Russia – for here was a clandestine organisation working among a population with a predisposition to insurrection, particularly in the rural areas. There can be little doubt, therefore, that the Spanish experience, following as it did on his research on the French Revolution and the assassination attempts in Germany and Russia, encouraged Kropotkin to envisage a proliferation of both collective and *individual* acts of revolt as the necessary prelude of revolution.

But exactly how had Kropotkin reacted to the assassination attempts in Germany and Russia? In the case of Vera Zasulich, he had echoed the enthusiastic support of the other internationalists. In his memoirs, he claimed that after her escape 'she went abroad, and was soon among us in Switzerland', and that her devotion 'produced a tremendous impression' on the workers in Europe.[55] According to her own account, when she arrived in Geneva, Russian anarchists expected her to identify with the anarchist movement and to promote the anarchist cause against the social democrats:

Now, suddenly – on the second or third day after I had arrived – I was confronted with the following plan. The Parisian anarchists would set a day and a time for my arrival in Paris and prepare a welcome of at least several thousand people. The police might intervene, but would not be permitted to arrest me.

I refused in no uncertain terms, but they kept assuring me that it was necessary . . .

When we had finished with that plan, another rose to confront us: I must write an open letter against the German Social Democrats, putting them in their place. I don't remember now exactly which paper was supposed to print the letter, but everyone expected it to be copied, quoted, and widely distributed.[56]

It would seem that the anarchists had virtually tried to appropriate Zasulich's action. They had probably seen it as an illustration of effective propaganda by deed, for the sensational way popular support had resulted in her acquittal and escape from rearrest, encouraged the belief that the affair had increased the likelihood of a revolutionary outbreak

in Russia. Certainly, according to Zasulich, this had been the conviction of Kravchinsky who had helped her escape to Switzerland. 'Through the prism of foreign newspapers and Sergei's own imagination, my acquittal and the demonstration that followed it had seemed to him the start of the revolution.'[57] Kravchinsky's close association with the anarchist International makes it highly likely that his view influenced the response of the anarchists. Zasulich herself, however, saw her action in quite a different light – for her it had been the only form of protest which remained open to her in the face of relentless government persecution of the revolutionary movement, and she had entertained no dramatic expectations about its impact on the people.

Kropotkin, in fact, seems to have accepted Zasulich's own view of her action and its significance in the Russian situation. Certainly, that is the impression he gives in his memoirs. Moreover, a few years later at his trial at Lyon in 1883, he made the following statement with reference to the attack on Trepov: 'I think that when a party, like the nihilists of Russia, finds itself in a position where it must either disappear, subside or answer violence with violence – then it had no cause to hesitate and must necessarily use violence.'[58] Kropotkin's appraisal of Vera Zasulich's action was more sober than that of Kravchinsky. Nevertheless, he had been deeply moved by the affair and its impact on the workers in Europe. He must, therefore, have been a party to the attempts to involve Zasulich in the anarchist movement. But it is not clear what part he had played in the plan for her reception in Paris or the proposal that she should offer a public criticism of the German social democrats, for at the time of her arrival in Switzerland he was about to leave for Spain – it was only after his return that he mentioned having met her just before the Congress at Fribourg.[59] There can be no doubt however, that the attack on Trepov had drawn Kropotkin's attention to the possibilities of the individual act of revolt.

The attempts on the life of the German Emperor may well have been inspired – at least in part – by the example of Zasulich, but Hoedal and Nobiling, unlike the Russian populist, had almost certainly acted quite independently of any movement, whilst the motivation for their action had been much less clear. As we have seen, both Kropotkin and Brousse made it clear that the German acts had not been the result of any anarchist conspiracy. Equally, Kropotkin, in his account of the events leading to the creation of *Le Révolté*, recorded that *L'Avant-Garde* had welcomed the attempts on the life of the Emperor as republican and republican socialist acts of propaganda by deed. He did not, how-

ever, mention Brousse's complaint that there was nothing truly socialist about these acts and that they were much less effective than collectivist action in any case.[60] In fact, he pointed out that Hoedal had been a socialist. In the letter of 1909 in which he expressed his dislike of the phrase 'propaganda by deed' he commented somewhat sarcastically about Brousse's reaction to the act of Hoedal: 'You will find in the article on Hoedal in *L'Avant-Garde* this phrase . . . What is Hoedal's act? – An act of *republican* propaganda (*Socialist* propaganda had to be something else).'[61] For Kropotkin, the important point was that when individuals, outraged by the system, attempted to take the life of a man, they did so because he was a viper whom they hated – not because they wanted to make propaganda.[62] Moreover he was not critical of the fact that these acts had been individual and not collective, for as he makes clear in his article 'Comment fut fondé Le Révolté', it was his impression that Hoedal and Nobiling had acted out of disillusionment with the ways of the social democrats: 'These men separated from the workers declared themselves tired of the stagnation into which the whole of the socialist movement had fallen.' It would seem, therefore, that even though they had utterly failed to inspire popular imagination and support as Zasulich had done, they had provided a dramatic alternative to the statist tactics of the social democrats which Kropotkin, like the German Internationalists could not help but find attractive. All the more so, since he had been closely involved with the German anarchist group and the *Arbeiter Zeitung* and must have kept in close touch through his responsibility for the International column of *L'Avant-Garde.*[63]

Meanwhile at the Congress of Fribourg, where the Jura militants now managed to dominate the Federation in the absence of Guillaume,[64] Kropotkin finally made a clear statement of his views on revolutionary tactics. On this occasion, he ostensibly supported Brousse's communalist position. Reiterating the Frenchman's claim that the independence of the communes would provide the starting point for revolution, he urged with him involvement in communal affairs:

> It is the immense variety of questions of communal interest, that we will find the most propitious field for theoretical propaganda and for the insurrectional realisation of our collectivist and anarchist ideas. The affairs of the municipal and agricultural commune closely interest a large part of the inhabitants; and it is above all in taking an active part in the daily affairs of the communes that we can demonstrate in a way visible and comprehensible to all the evils of present-day society and

the advantages of applying our economic and political principles. From the economic point of view, the commune offers an excellent ground for the propaganda of collectivism, and can serve to prepare the way for economic revolution. From the political point of view, the commune is the powerful weapon of war against the State.[65]

Kropotkin even went so far as to speak in favour of Brousse's argument for the destructivist vote – an argument which involved advocating the use of the vote to establish a revolutionary commune which would initiate social change and opposition to the state. Nevertheless, he presented a view of anarchist action in the commune which was purely insurrectionary, and which seems hardly compatible with the suspiciously reformist-type tactics advocated on this occasion by Brousse. The latter envisaged the destructivist vote as an alternative form of propaganda by deed where insurrectional agitation was not possible:

The comfortable classes maintain themselves by violence. It is therefore by violence that they must be destroyed. The way to achieve this is therefore to bring about an accumulation of sufficiently large forces. This can only be secured by propaganda.

For some time, the men of the anarchist party have recognised this necessity, and insurrectional agitation, *propaganda by deed*, has come to play a large part in its methods of action.

But at moments when theoretical propaganda is insufficient and when insurrectional action itself is impossible, must we absolutely avoid participation in the vote?

. . . There are cases where the destruction of the State is still impossible in its entirety, but where a piece of machinery may become jammed as a result of the vote itself; where it is possible to set one mechanism against another, a commune for example against the government; in these cases the vote could be employed usefully.

Kropotkin, on the other hand, rejected any tactic which might end up reinforcing the already tottering idea of the state – anarchists, he insisted, sought to awaken the popular spirit of revolt for the violent expropriation of property and the disorganisation of the state, by theoretical propaganda and above all by insurrectional acts. He pointed out how events in the commune during times of crisis provided the best breeding ground for the insurrections which preceded all great revolutions and which prepared the popular feeling and idea of revolt. He urged the Jurassians to exploit local incidents to promote such an insurrection.

The affairs which arise in the communes, perhaps in times of strikes, perhaps on the subject of taxes, etc., make towns and villages the field where those insurrections

best germinate which go before each great revolution and prepare the popular idea and sentiment. Levashoff, therefore, strongly pledges the Jurassian sections to follow communal affairs closely to take advantage of all incidents they can provide which can be resolved into one of those insurrections which will certainly not take long to be produced on the socialist communalist ground.

It seems strange that having made insurrectionary tactics such a central theme Kropotkin should have supported Brousse's argument in favour of the destructivist vote, where this meant using the voting process to establish a revolutionary commune. Brousse, however, had maintained that to suggest possible advantages in the use of the vote in special circumstances was not to advocate a retreat from the general anarchist position against parliamentarism:

The vote – he says – can be considered in different ways. As a principle, expressing popular sovereignty, he rejects it as always: he knows that it cannot lead to the conquest of power; he knows that it cannot even on its own, serve to bring together any truly revolutionary party; on these two points what is now happening in the German democracy has enlightened all minds.

He knows further how many popular delegates have betrayed their electors.

But is it necessary to conclude that the vote should be forbidden in such an absolute way that in no case can it be used to render any service?

He does not think so.[66]

Such a statement may have allayed any anxieties about Brousse's revolutionary commitment, but it does not explain Kropotkin's uncritical acceptance of his friend's argument for the use of the vote. In fact it seems likely that Kropotkin's behaviour on this occasion was dictated less by conviction than practical necessity. His primary concern at Fribourg was to support Brousse in pressing for involvement in the affairs of the commune, and it was not easy to do that whilst arguing with him over the question of the vote – particularly when Kahn from the Genevan Group was criticising the notion of the destructivist vote in the context of a more general argument against the communalist position.[67] For Kropotkin, therefore, the best way of dealing with anything doubtful in Brousse's position was simply to counteract it by a firm uncompromising exposition of his own ideas of revolutionary action. It is significant that Kropotkin actually said very little about the vote, that he never suggested that it could in some circumstances be an alternative form of propaganda by deed, that indeed he made no reference to the phrase propaganda by deed, preferring to talk about insurrectionary and revolutionary action instead. Like Reclus who, in a letter to the Congress, had declared 'Whilst the iniquity lasts, we

anarchist-collectivist internationalists will remain in a state of permanent revolution', Kropotkin made it quite clear that in his view the anarchist position was uncompromisingly revolutionary. And the rest of the delegates appear to have agreed with him, for they declared unequivocally for revolutionary and insurrectionary action:

As to the means: 1. theoretical propaganda; 2. insurrectionary and revolutionary action; 3. as for the vote: that it could not be considered as a principle of right capable of realising the so-called sovereignty of the people; that as an instrument its use is always dangerous, but that there should be a study as to whether *yes* or *no* its use should be forbidden in an absolute way.

Kropotkin had exerted an influence on the Jura Federation which may well have exceeded that of Brousse. The visit to Spain had generated in him a new confidence and enthusiasm. 'As for me, with the return from Spain, I feel perfectly restored morally,' he declared in a letter to Robin. And he was now able to express his own vision of revolutionary action with a conviction that perhaps eluded Brousse whose confidence in the anarchist anti-statist position had begun to waver. Certainly, Kropotkin was encouraged by the response he had evoked at the Congress, and indeed believed that there might be a real practical response to his call for involvement in communal agitation. Things were still going badly for the Federation he told Robin but he thought he now saw some signs of life:

Affairs here are going rather badly, the majority of the sections are disorganised, they are all tired, having more or less gone through the same crises that threw me off my tracks for these 7 or 8 months. Now there are a few signs of life. The Congress is not large but delegates raise new questions and, as a result of my proposal perhaps, will take part in communal agitation.[68]

But if Kropotkin was successfully putting forward his own view of revolutionary action, that view was still like that of Brousse – primarily a collective one. For he urged the necessity of encouraging preliminary insurrectionary outbreaks rather than individual revolutionary acts, to build up the popular spirit of revolt for the revolution itself. Like all the delegates at Fribourg, he joined in the resolution expressing sympathy and support for the revolutionary acts of Hoedal and Nobiling, and condemning the German Social Democrats for their denunciation of these revolutionary acts. But he made no case for individual revolutionary action. Possibly this was because, although sympathetic to the individual act, he still regarded it as much less important than the collectivist one.[69]

Meanwhile, towards the end of September, news reached the Jura of Kravchinsky's assassination of Mezentsov – an act of which Kropotkin must have approved, since like other Russian revolutionaries he had been outraged at the police chief's behaviour to those convicted at the trial of the 193.[70] This was followed in October by Moncasi's attempt on the life of the King of Spain and in November by Passanante's on the life of the King of Italy.[71] In his article 'Comment fut fondé le Révolté' Kropotkin linked these two acts with those of Hoedal and Nobiling as the action of individuals disillusioned by the situation in the socialist movement. And he quoted a report from the Spanish correspondent to support his claim that *L'Avant-Garde* saw, in acts like that of Moncasi, the possibility of starting a revolution which would soon take on a socialist character.

> Men unconnected with the workers have declared themselves to be tired of the stagnation into which the whole socialist movement has fallen.
>
> The worker Hoedal fired at the Emperor of Germany and was followed, fifteen days later, by Dr Nobiling, who did the same thing. The young Spanish cooper, Juan Oliva Moncasi, fired at the King of Spain and the cook Passanante threw himself with his knife at the King of Italy.
>
> L'Avant-Garde welcomed the deeds as acts of propaganda by deed – republican and republican-socialist propaganda: Moncasi, Passanante, Hoedal were, in effect, socialist and Passanante was a republican-socialist. These attentats could have accelerated a political revolution which could soon have taken on a socialist character.
>
> 'It is therefore certain,' wrote our correspondent from Spain, 'that in these conditions, if Oliva's pistol shot had hit its target it would have done a great service to the Revolution by precipitating a movement which would have been better not delayed. Let us pity him also for not having aimed better.'

Although Kropotkin here referred to Brousse's article on assassination, he ascribed a viewpoint to *L'Avant-Garde* which clearly conflicted with his friend's article (Brousse had denied that there was anything socialist about the acts of Hoedal and Nobiling). Brousse undoubtedly had been more sympathetic to the deed of Moncasi but the statement from the Spanish correspondent did not represent his general view of the *attentats* of 1878. In fact Kropotkin was here ascribing to *L'Avant-Garde* a viewpoint which emanated primarily from the Spanish Federation and with which he, rather than Brousse, sympathised. It would seem safe therefore to assume that the *attentats* of 1878 had convinced Kropotkin of the increasing relevance of the individual act of revolt.

Meanwhile any doubts Kropotkin may have had about this must have been dispelled by the failure of the Jurassians to respond to the

communalist approach he had advocated at Fribourg. At the beginning of November he wrote a despondent letter to Robin about the situation in the Federation.[72] The northern section he declared had continued to decline. Things were going less badly in the south – an active group had developed at Lausanne in the wake of a severe economic crisis, Kropotkin had been able to stimulate a revival in Geneva and a lively group had emerged at Fribourg as a result of the Congress. But much of this depended on the work and inspiration of Brousse and Kropotkin and would be unlikely to continue without them. Kropotkin had not been able to inspire even a few young members to take some initiative in active propaganda. The groups indeed had no idea what to do.

But what can we find for these people to do, that is the greatest question of all! Talk, ever more talk, this ends in boredom, and what can be done that is practical ??? Elections are no good to us; political life is so calm here that nothing agitates the population; insurrections are impossible! What is to be done? . . . The International so far, and in particular nowadays, is only a study group. It has no practical field of action.

Kropotkin's idea for communalist action had not been implemented because of lack of support among the Swiss:

I had thought of agitation in the communal ground. But how could it be done without the Swiss? I know that in France this ground would rally many forces. But in Switzerland, *to start with* we have no one. *Adhémar* does nothing, absolutely *nothing*. We cannot even get a letter from him about an interview that took place at La Chaud-de-Fonds. *Auguste Spichiger* – takes great care with the sending out of L'Avant-Garde, but that is all: he does not want to do anything more.

Kropotkin's hope for some sort of collective action in the commune has been well and truly crushed. It would seem inevitable that he should now look for a more individual type of revolutionary action.

Unfortunately, the violent acts of individuals in Germany, Italy and Spain had resulted in severe repressive measures being taken by the authorities against the International in a situation where, outside Spain, the movement's grass roots organisation was somewhat ephemeral. Kropotkin must have recognised that the anarchist international would have great difficulty in surviving and developing as a popular movement by the advocacy and perpetration of 'attentats'. During 1879 he therefore continued to urge the importance of collective action even though expressing considerable sympathy and interest in *attentats*.

6

Kropotkin and acts of revolt

For Kropotkin and his comrades in the Jura Federation the outlook at the beginning of 1879 was particularly grim. Brousse had been arrested and *L'Avant-Garde*, the only remaining anarchist paper, suppressed. In a letter to Robin in April Kropotkin complained that the revival of popular interest in the movement after the Congress of Fribourg had faded in the face of persecution and economic depression.[1] Moreover, already demoralised by the decline of grassroots support and the constant threat of unemployment, even militants like Spichiger, Pindy and Schwitzguébel had been intimidated into withdrawing from active involvement in the movement. The Swiss had not responded to Kropotkin's plea for collective action in the commune, and the violent acts by individuals with which anarchists in Switzerland as well as in Italy and Spain had sympathised, had endangered the very existence of the Anarchist International.

Depressed though he was by this situation, Kropotkin was convinced that events were moving inexorably towards revolution – that increasing government repression only revealed the bankruptcy of capitalist states and the inevitability of their collapse in the face of rising popular discontent. And believing that it was hope, not despair, which makes successful revolutions, his immediate concern was to communicate his views to the people so as to sustain and inspire them in the face of oppression. He therefore proposed the setting up of a paper to replace the *Bulletin* and *L'Avant-Garde*. But the response of the sections in the Jura Federation was negative. Only Brousse supported the idea – all the others predicted certain failure.[2] Come what may, however, Kropotkin, with the help of Brousse and two friends in the Genevan section, was determined to press ahead with the sceheme: 'We discussed at length the need for a newsheet and argued that *volens-nolens* we were forced to undertake this public service.'[3]

This meant that the paper was moderate at least in tone and the incitement to revolt was implicit instead of explicit. Where *L'Avant-Garde* had urged its readers to leave the radicals to their pacific twaddle and turn to the guns hanging in their attics,[4] *Le Révolté*, the new journal declared, 'the people will soon pronounce the fall of the bourgeoisie. It will take its affairs into its own hands as soon as the right moment presents itself.'[5] Kropotkin, making a principle of what originally developed partly out of practical necessity, described in his memoirs this editorial formula of *Le Révolté*:

> Socialist papers have often a tendency to become mere annals of complaints about existing conditions . . . [which] exercises a most depressing influence upon the reader. To counterbalance that effect, the editor has to rely chiefly upon burning words, by means of which he tries to inspire his readers with energy and faith. I thought, on the contrary, that a revolutionary paper must be, above all, a record of those symptoms which everywhere announce the coming of a new era, the germination of new forms of life, the growing revolt against antiquated institutions. These symptoms should be watched, brought together in their intimate connection, and so grouped as to show to the hesitating minds of the greater number the invisible and often unconscious support which advanced ideas find everywhere, when a revival of thought takes place in society.[6]

Kropotkin's editorial formula worked well. *Le Révolté* which appeared for the first time on 22 February 1879, was a success and it secured a much higher readership than *L'Avant-Garde* in spite of police harassment which prevented it being sold openly on the streets.[7] It also escaped suppression. For a time, just after Brousse's trial, its survival was threatened by a boycott of Swiss printers, but the intrepid little band of *Le Révolté* solved the problem by setting up their own printing press.

Kropotkin's achievement in launching *Le Révolté* was remarkable. In the first place nearly everybody had expected the paper to fail – at the outset even Kropotkin and his helpers had been less than optimistic about its chances of survival. 'If the paper is forced to die in three months, for lack of money – well let it fall,' he wrote in his January letter to Robin. In the second place, the appearance of *Le Révolté* had provided the anarchist movement with an organ of propaganda at a very difficult time when attacks both from the state and the social democrats had intensified. Finally, the paper's success gave credibility to the prophecies printed in its own pages which declared that a revolutionary spirit existed among the oppressed which could survive persecution and pave the way to a resurgence of the working-class movement as was already happening in France.

In the suffocating factory, as in the gloomy low eating house, beneath the roof of the attic, as in the streaming gallery of the mine, a whole new world is now being built up . . . New aspirations are being developed, new conceptions sketched out.

The ruling classes stifle these aspirations in vain. They imprison men and suppress writings, in vain. The new idea penetrates people's minds, it fills the heads of serfs, as they hasten to join the crusade. The idea can be dormant one moment; if prevented from developing on the surface, it can undermine the ground; but it will soon reappear, more vigorous than ever. We have only to look at the awakening of socialism in France, a second awakening in the short space of fifteen years. The wave, fallen one moment, rises up again higher.[8]

So wrote Kropotkin in one of the editorials of the paper whose very existence lent a certain truth to such words. In fact, the publication of *Le Révolté* was in itself an act of revolt, and an act of revolt of a small group – one might almost say of an individual – for at the beginning the main driving force was Kropotkin himself.

Schwitzguébel refused to provide editorials for the paper and was only persuaded with great difficulty to produce one article for the first issue.[9] Brousse chose the name for the paper and wrote the first leader article 'Les Révoltés', but he could give very little further help because of his trial, and with his expulsion from Switzerland in June his involvement in *Le Révolté* virtually ended.[10] Reclus also provided an article for the first issue but he did not play an active role in the project, although from May 1879 he gave financial support in spite of earlier reservations about starting a paper on a shoe-string.[11] Herzig and Dumartheray played an important role in the production of the paper, but although they were constructive critics of everything Kropotkin wrote and even helped him put together the column on the social movement, they were unable to write articles themselves.[12] Others, including members of the section at Geneva, helped with printing and distribution, but none of them provided articles. The responsibility for providing material for publication, therefore, fell mainly on Kropotkin who at first felt some misgivings about his journalistic skills. Certainly, he struggled with his first editorials. 'Those of issues 2 and 4 are done by me; – but with much difficulty, if only you knew!' he confided to Robin.[13] But his style of propaganda appealed to the workers as perhaps no one else's had done, for what he wrote was both inspiring and easy to understand. 'I have done my best so that there may be no political or social question that the worker reader leaves to the educated bourgeois that he does not feel able to discuss if he gives it enough attention,' he declared. And in this way during 1879 and 1880, with the help only of Herzig and Dumartheray, he established *Le Révolté* as

the leading revolutionary newspaper in the French language. (No other socialist paper sold as well as *Le Révolté* until the *Cri Du Peuple* which began to appear in 1883.)

If the promotion of *Le Révolté* had been something of an individual act of revolt, what view of revolutionary action did Kropotkin actually express in its pages? Essentially, he was still rather more preoccupied with collective than individual types of action – leader articles in which he pointed out signs of approaching revolution focussed on riots and strikes.

> This heavy atmosphere of hypocrisy, platitude and base passions would be stifling, if the lightning flashes which announce the next awakening did not tear apart the suffocating clouds. The awakening is announced: there is no mistaking it. In France, socialism is gaining ground each day; it is gaining strength and authority...
>
> The little war blazes up again, stretches out, spreading from country to country, every strike extends more and more, in depth and extent, the gulf opening up between the defenders of the *status quo* and the people seeking their emancipation.
>
> Germany is no longer calm. Immobilised for a moment by reactionary fury, socialists have now set to work again, and they are inaugurating a new way which always produces results, agitation outside the legal field. The prejudice in favour of legality once destroyed, this first step will determine the next ones.
>
> A secret agitation embraces the peninsulas of the South. Revolts follow each other in Italy and Spain...
>
> Compare these facts with the calm of three years ago and tell us if we are not entitled to assert that this is the beginning of the end?
>
> Each great Revolution has been preceded by such movements and brutal suppression will not stop the explosion which is on the way. A movement so general and so spontaneous cannot be stifled.

Clearly Kropotkin was mainly concerned here with collective acts of revolt. Even his comments about Germany relate to collective action. They referred to proposals, among the more radical elements of the social democratic party, for creating a clandestine revolutionary organisation in response to the severe repression directed against them as a result of the anti-socialist laws.[14]

Nevertheless, Kropotkin undoubtedly believed that the individual act of revolt had an important part to play in events leading up to the revolution. The reaction of *Le Révolté* to the trial and conviction of Passanante is very significant in this connection, not least because it presents such a contrast to that of Brousse to the earlier *attentats* in 1878. In March 1879 the paper carried a report of the proceedings against Passanante; it was an entirely sympathetic one.[15] The author was deeply moved by the Italian's courage and commitment in carrying through his self-sacrificing act of protest, and it did not worry

him that Passanante's ideas represented a crude expression of some sort of vague socialist republicanism, for here was a man of the people stirred into action by his own perception of the wrongs of the poor and how they could be righted. The writer indeed criticised newspapers in general for the dismissive way they had treated Passanante's views. Two weeks later (5 April) in its section on the social movement, *Le Révolté* reported Passanante's defiant reaction to the commutation of the death sentence to one of life imprisonment: 'I want them to kill me so as to gain followers.'

Passanante and his 'attentat' were seen as an example, not only of the individual worker's instinctive feeling for a socialist ideal, but also of his capacity for taking heroic action to inspire others to revolt against oppression. The fact that Passanante was a self-styled republican rather than anti-statist seems to have been unimportant – after all, his ideas had a strong populist element in them, and his act of revolt had been successful in evoking a sympathetic reaction among the poor.[16] The publication of a report such as this in *Le Révolté* can leave little doubt of Kropotkin's deepening interest in the individual act of revolt as an essential feature of the events leading to revolution.

It is interesting to note that soon after this, in May, the Spanish Federation issued a clandestine circular urging in bold uncompromising language the necessity of both collective and individual acts of war against the idle rich.

> War, collective or individual, always war, fight until they see the light, or until we have conquered.
>
> The first ones will succumb. It is true. They will have set the example. They will have sown the true cause of the people with their generous blood.
>
> Without the need for banners they will have stamped their goals high; so high that the concupiscent and obstinate bourgeoisie will be terrified to read in each and every one of our actions the sacred mottos:
>
> HE WHO WISHES TO EAT MUST WORK!
>
> THOSE WHO DO NOT WORK AND FOR ANY REASON LIVE OFF THE PEOPLE, STEAL FROM THE WORKERS! THEY ARE THE THIEVES!
>
> LET THE IDLE DRONES DIE!
>
> THE LAND FOR THE FARMER! THE FACTORY FOR THE WORKER! THE WORKSHOP FOR THE ARTISAN!
>
> LONG LIVE THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION.[17]

Although Kropotkin liked clandestine literature of this type he probably never subscribed to the sort of indiscriminate violence against the bourgeoisie which seems to have been envisaged here.[18] The language of *Le Révolté*, moreover, in keeping with its editorial policy, continued

to be generally restrained. On the other hand, during 1880 its articles were to be characterised by a more direct advocacy of revolutionary action than heretofore. At the same time a commitment to both individual and collective self-sacrificing acts of revolt was always implicit in Kropotkin's commentaries on contemporary events and developments.

Kropotkin and his comrades in Spain and Italy had obviously been influenced by tactics adopted by Russian revolutionaries in their desperate struggle against the increasingly repressive autocracy of Alexander II – tactics which now frequently involved attempts on the lives of those most closely associated with government oppression. Kropotkin's preoccupation and sympathy with the actions of the Zemlya i Volya is very evident in his regular and detailed accounts of the developments in Russia. In reporting the assassinations he described them as executions. 'The executions of zealous government agents by the socialists continue,' he wrote in March 1879. He also made it clear that victims like the governor of Kharkov had deserved their fate,[19]

Nevertheless, writing to Robin in April, he expressed serious misgivings about the revolutionary movement in Russia, and declaring that he saw no place for himself within it, gave up any idea of returning there. It seemed to him, that in spite of the assassinations, Russian revolutionaries were more concerned to secure a democratic constitution than to start a socialist revolution; he complained that Zemlya i Volya, for all its claims to be a socialist paper, could only speak against autocracy.[20] Kropotkin was obviously worried that the Russian revolutionary movement seemed to be abandoning populist agitation for that of a more narrowly political kind. The arrest of Klements, the chaikovskist, in February, had deprived the review of the principal editor who had kept the paper to a strictly populist line. The immediate cause of his disquiet may have been a report in the *Bulletin* of the Zemlya i Volya movement which was now beginning to replace its monthly paper. The report appeared just after an attack on the life of the new police chief, Drenteln, in March. It described political assassination as one of the best weapons of agitation against despotism, and urged the necessity of aiming at the centre so as to make the whole system tremble. It also declared that mass movements belonged to the future when the terrorists had prepared a way for them.[21] Violent as this article was, it revealed a narrow preoccupation with terrorist assaults on autocracy which implied an abandonment of populist

agitation. And, in fact, although Kropotkin maintained fairly close contact with ex-chaikovskists like Klements and Kravchinsky, he kept somewhat aloof from the groups of Russian revolutionaries exiled in Geneva. In 1883 in his book *Underground Russia*, Kravchinsky complained that Kropotkin had adopted an ideological position which was too rigid and this had not only disqualified him from taking any leading role in underground agitation but it had also prevented him from writing anything for the Russian revolutionary press.[22] Kravchinsky was one of those who had come to the conclusion that there could be no popular revolutionary movement in Russia until a minimum of political freedom had been secured. In April 1879 he reacted enthusiastically to Soloviev's attempt on the life of the Tsar, dismissing objections about the possible adverse effects such action might have on agitation among the people.

> All of us knew from our personal experience that extensive work among the people had long been impossible, nor could we expect to expand our activity and attract masses of the people to the socialist cause until we obtained at least a minimum of political freedom, freedom of speech, and the freedom to organise unions; as far as propaganda was concerned, we of the intelligentsia had done all we could under the circumstances, and far fewer losses would be incurred if the workers themselves continued this activity.[23]

There can be little doubt that Kropotkin must have been disturbed by his friend's increasing preoccupation with direct attacks on autocracy itself; certainly Kravchinsky's comments about Kropotkin suggest the two revolutionaries had disagreed over questions both of theory and tactics at this time. Even so Kropotkin published a pamphlet in support of Soloviev.

Undoubtedly Soloviev had impeccable populist credentials – he had spent longer than most revolutionaries working and spreading propaganda amongst the people, and had continued to express his faith in the possibility of such populist activity even after his decision to kill the Tsar. But in his deposition at his trial he had declared: 'We revolutionary Socialists have declared war on the government'.[24] Kropotkin could not have subscribed to this commitment to such a narrowly political form of terrorism. So how then could he have given such unequivocal public support to Soloviev? Certainly he must have felt that he could do no other than express solidarity with Russian revolutionaries whatever action they took whilst they suffered such savage persecution. But if he had any reservations about the orientation of Russian terrorist tactics why publish a special pamphlet in memory of

Soloviev? The answer lies in Kropotkin's interpretation of Soloviev's attempt on the life of the Tsar – an interpretation which virtually divested it of its essentially political character as an act of attempted regicide, and turned it into a self-sacrificing act of revolt which would build up the spirit of revolt among the people.

Soloviev is dead: but the idea for which he worked all his life, does not die . . .

These heads which pass proudly under the noose proclaiming to thw crowd, on high from the scaffold, the promise of a better future, will not fall in vain. They inspire the survivors who take a solemn vow to work at the same task; they rally new sympathies to the party; they attract the attention of the most indifferent to those lives, whose sole aim has been to sacrifice themselves to help the people throw off the yoke, under which they have groaned for centuries; they make the laziest reflect.

The bourgeoisie feels dissatisfied with this reign, begun with such fine promises and ending in incapacity, arbitrary policing, bankruptcy and terror. Petersburg, the capital formerly so servile, expresses a notable indifference the day of the attentat, and becomes bleak and sad, the day of Soloviev's execution. The towns complain. And yonder, in the vast plains watered by the sweat of the ploughman who is still enslaved, in those sombre hamlets where misery kills all hopes, the blows of Soloviev's revolver become the cause of a secret agitation: insurrection, harbinger of revolutions, already makes its rumbling heard. The 1793 of the Russian peasant is in the air.[25]

In this pamphlet Kropotkin had applauded the attack on the Tsar primarily as an act of revolt against oppression which, like those that had preceded it, would inspire others to revolt, thereby preparing the way for a popular revolution. He obviously recognised that an act of revolt directed against the Tsar himself had a special significance, but in making it clear that the assassination of Alexander II was not a substitute for popular revolutionary action, he had indicated unmistakable disapproval for the concentration of revolutionary effort against autocratic government itself to secure a liberal constitution.[26]

In this context, it is significant that in June 1879 (just before the publication of the pamphlet) Kropotkin had published an enthusiastic review of the fifth issue of *Zemlya i Volya*. The leader article of the paper, reaffirming the movement's commitment to populist agitation, had advocated a campaign of economic terrorism in the countryside where socialists should organise armed resistance and acts of vengeance to support the peasants in their efforts to resist oppression. Kropotkin had welcomed this new orientation of Russian revolutionary activity.

It is clear that if the Russian socialists put into practice this mode of revolutionary action with the same talent for organisation, the same tenacity which they have

shown until now, they will soon succeed in producing a popular ferment and a series of uprisings which, in the period Russia is going through, will have consequences of the greatest importance. Instead of a mere change of government, in Russia we shall see a Revolution.[27]

Quite clearly, Kropotkin disliked tactics which focussed all revolutionary activity on efforts to establish constitutional government through the assassination of the Tsar. But he had been deeply moved and impressed by the terrorist activity in Russia, and this encouraged his sympathy and support for all acts of revolt against oppression whether they involved attacks on the head of state and those most closely associated with government oppression or acts of economic terrorism in the countryside (which he obviously preferred). Inspired as he was by the events of 1788–9 in France, he looked for a similar proliferation of acts of revolt to precipitate a popular revolution, and it seemed to him that this was what was happening in Russia, in spite of savage persecution and the political preoccupations of revolutionaries there. Certainly, that is the impression he sought to give, even though he may have written less out of conviction than a desire to persuade the Russian movement not to abandon populist tactics. In fact, by the autumn all his anxieties about the Russian movement had revived with the emergence of the party of Narodnaya Volya (The People's Will), committed to a direct political struggle against absolutism. Commenting on the programme of the new party in the first issue of its review, Kropotkin declared, 'We wholly share the ideas of our friends of *La Liberté* on the absolute necessity of overthrowing the tyrannical government in Russia. But we admit that we do not understand at all how this government can be overthrown, if the great mass of the Russian people remain calm, if the peasant does not rise up against his landlords.'[28]

It was possibly the increasingly narrow political orientation of Russian terrorism which now drew Kropotkin's attention to the fact that self-sacrificing acts of revolt against oppression did not necessarily represent an antithesis to the approach of the social democrats, and impressed upon him the need for anarchists themselves to influence acts of revolt in the direction of an anarchist revolution. In any case it is fairly clear that he had long been uneasy about ideas of revolutionary action in anarchist circles. At the annual congress of the Jura Federation in October he therefore called for a clarification of ideas about ways and means.

But if the theoretical part of our programme has been well elaborated and expounded, the same cannot be said of the practical part. *The path to follow to arrive at a realisation of our ideal and in the conditions given us by history* has not been expounded with the same breadth and depth of ideas . . . and it is this task that falls to the anarchist party today.[29]

In what was perhaps an oblique criticism of the somewhat confused notion of propaganda by deed – he studiously avoided the use of the phrase – he maintained that although anarchists had insisted on the importance of propaganda through action, there was no clear understanding about the nature of the action envisaged.

We have said that the propaganda for our ideas must be carried out not only by the spoken and written word, but also, and above all, through action, but – to judge from the way in which we have been understood – one would be inclined to believe that we have still not adequately explained the way in which we understand action; perhaps we have not made sufficiently clear that this form of propaganda is only possible, in our view, when *the action develops from life itself*, from favourable circumstances, otherwise it will certainly have neither a broad sphere of influence, nor the necessary continuity.[30]

The implication of this seems to be that Kropotkin felt that the idea of propaganda by deed had been bandied about in anarchist circles as if it was some sort of magic formula whereby any act of protest would promote the spread of anarchist ideas. It all comes back to Kropotkin's insistence that the propaganda effect of any anarchist action arose out of the immediate impact of such action on the serious real life struggle against oppression. He went on to point out that although many fairly precise ideas of ways and means had been put forward in the anarchist press by Guillaume and above all by Bakunin in his last writings, these ideas had never been brought together. And since he felt that until the movement had a clearly formulated programme of action it would be unable to attract the support of those who above all looked for a clear and precise formula, he proposed that the sections of the Federation should study this subject during the winter.

No doubt encouraged by his success with *Le Révolté*, Kropotkin presented a paper of his own on which to base the forthcoming discussions. And it is here in this document LL'*idée anarchiste au point de vue de sa réalisation pratique*', that he set out for the first time his ideas of a programme of action for the anarchist movement.

He identified three phases in the revolutionary process – *a preparatory period*, which would be followed by a *period of ferment* which, in its turn, would lead to the *period of transformation* (i.e. the revolution

itself). He then suggested a programme of anarchist action appropriate to each of these phases.

During the revolution itself – whatever character it took – the duty of true socialists would be to do all they could to bring about a transformation of the system of property by popular expropriation.

The economic revolution can take on a different character and different degrees of intensity with different populations. But it is important, whatever its character, that socialists of all countries, profiting from the disorganisation of governmental powers during the revolutionary period, should apply all their forces to effect on a vast scale the transformation of the régime of property through expropriation . . . accomplished by the workers of the towns and countryside themselves.

They should also keep the revolution going until the new organisation of society had emerged by preventing the establishment of a new government and by awakening the forces of popular creativity. For every locality would not be ready to start a socialist revolution at the same moment and time would be needed for the new ideas to develop and to spread throughout society:

In order that the revolution should bring all the advantages the proletariat has the right to expect after centuries of ceaseless struggle and the holocausts of victims sacrificed, the revolutionary period will have to last for several years, so that the propaganda for the new ideas will not be limited to the main intellectual centres, but penetrates into the most isolated hamlets, to vanquish the inertia which necessarily appears in the masses before they launch into a fundamental reorganisation of society, so that in the end, new ideas have the time to achieve their fullest development, necessary to the real progress of humanity . . . it is the duty of socialists to prevent the creation of any new government, and to awaken instead those forces of the people capable at the same time of destroying the *ancien régime* and creating a new organisation of society.[31]

The new ideas would be spread as successful acts of expropriation and collectivisation in one locality and would inspire similar action in others. 'The act accomplished in one locality becomes itself the most powerful means of propaganda for the idea and the most powerful drive to set in motion those localities where the worker, prepared perhaps to accept the ideas of collectivism, would still hesitate to proceed to expropriation.' Should the insurrection fail, the coming of the social revolution would have been speeded up, and any future insurrection would have to take expropriation as its starting point: 'But even if the revolution had been crushed, or expropriation had not spread as we expected, a popular rising started on this basis would render an immense service to humanity by accelerating the arrival of the social revolution . . . it would make any uprising which did not begin with

expropriation from the few for the benefit of all, henceforth impossible.'

In effect, Kropotkin expected anarchists during the revolution to promote those deeds which would propagandise anarchist ideals, and he maintained that this could be done successfully even where the attempt at revolution failed. This was perhaps the nearest he came to expounding anything like the broussist idea of propaganda by deed. The deeds he had in mind however were the deeds not of the party but of the people themselves.

As regards both the *preparatory period* and the *period of ferment*, Kropotkin declared that anarchists would need to concentrate their efforts on widespread propaganda in all its forms in favour of the ideas of expropriation and collectivism. He made it clear that this work would be arduous during the *preparatory stage* through which they were now passing, but insisted that a change in popular thinking could be achieved by using every situation to prove the need for anarchist principles and to demonstrate their practical significance:

> Such being our conception of the next revolution and the aim that we propose to attain, it is clear, that, during the preparatory period through which we are now passing, we have to concentrate all our efforts on widespread propaganda in favour of the idea of expropriation and collectivism . . . we have . . . always, in all circumstances, to fully expound these principles, showing their practical significance, proving the necessity for doing all we can to prepare the popular mind for the acceptance of those ideas which, strange as they may at first appear to those imbued with political–economic prejudices, soon became an undeniable truth for those who discuss them in good faith, a truth which science today embraces, a truth often admitted even by those who attack them in public. Working in this way without letting ourselves be dazzled by the transient and often false success of political parties, we are working for the infiltration of our ideas amongst the masses; imperceptibly we bring about a change in public opinion favourable to our ideas.

He stressed the importance of immediate propaganda work in the countryside as well as the towns:

> If the revolutionary period is to last some years and bear fruit, it is absolutely necessary that the next revolution should not be limited only to large towns: the uprising for expropriation must take place above all in the countryside. It is therefore necessary, without relying on the revolutionary impetus which could in the period of ferment, spread the light from the towns into the villages, from today – to prepare the ground in the countryside.
>
> As a temporary measure and an experiment the Jurassian sections should take on the duty of carrying out sustained propaganda in the direction of expropriation of land by the rural communes in villages close to the towns. However difficult the beginnings, this must be done without delay. In addition, we cannot recommend

too strongly the study of the peasant uprisings in Italy and the revolutionary propaganda being carried out in the villages in Spain.

Once the *period of ferment* had begun, revolutionary ideas would spread much more quickly, and it would be necessary to have groups of propagandists ready to respond to this situation:

We will gather together the men necessary for the widespread propaganda in favour of those ideas during the period of ferment which we are approaching; and we know from the experience of human history, that when the diffusion and transformation of ideas takes place with a speed unknown in periods of calm, the principles of expropriation and collectivism will be able to spread in great waves and inspire the mass of the people to put those principles into practice.

All this concentration on propaganda however, should not lead anarchists to neglect opportunities for making agitation on all questions of everyday life which stir up the workers.

Whilst recommending the concentration of our efforts on a widespread propaganda for the idea of expropriation in all its forms, we do not mean to say thereby that opportunities should be neglected for making agitation on all questions concerning the life of the country which arise around us. On the contrary, we think that all socialists have to profit from all opportunities which can give rise to economic agitation . . . It would therefore be useful for the sections not to pass over disdainfully diverse questions which excite local workers for the sole reason that such questions have very little in common with socialism. On the contrary, by involving themselves in all these questions, by profiting from the interest they excite, we could work to spread the agitation on a much larger scale and, while remaining on the practical level of the question, seek to enlarge the theoretical conceptions and awake the spirit of independence and revolt in those concerned with the agitation produced.

This involvement in questions which interested the workers was very important, he added, because it was the only means of combating the economic ideas spread by the bourgeoisie and of preventing the agitation being exploited by the ambitious in a way contrary to the interests of the workers. He also maintained that although the best way of destroying the state was to activate the economic struggle, it was important to keep an eye upon the deeds and achievements of the governing class to study carefully the political questions that interested the working people and to take every opportunity to point out the evils of the existing governmental régime. Finally, he declared that since the grouping of the society of the future would be that of the independent collectivist commune, anarchists should seriously consider the part they could take in the struggle between the communes and the state.

Convinced that the Commune, independent of the State, will be the form of grouping which is going to be realised in the near future (at least in countries of Latin origin) . . . we believe it necessary seriously to study the collective Commune, and discuss the part that anarchists can take in the struggle which is now taking place, in the political and economic field, between the Communes and the State.

Kropotkin's report was an impressive attempt to provide a solid basis for the formulation of an anarchist policy of action as a positive alternative to parliamentarism. It indicated the necessity for a wide-ranging involvement in the everyday questions and problems of the people both in the town and the countryside, warning against that sectarianism which could so easily isolate anarchists from popular action. It stressed the importance of the special character of anarchist propaganda and agitation insisting that anarchist action should be inspired by the aim of promoting the ideas of expropriation and collectivism. Finally, it made it quite clear that there were no easy short cuts to social revolution, pointing out the need for a systematic and patient approach to agitation and propaganda. Kropotkin showed that if setbacks were not tempting him, as they had Brousse and Costa, to turn to some form of parliamentarism,[32] they had also not led him to an unqualified enthusiasm for terrorism. For all the importance he attached to the *attentats* as part of the process of a proliferation of acts of revolt leading to revolution, it is difficult to see how they could relate very directly to the promotion of ideas of expropriation and collectivism which is so central to Kropotkin's concept of a specifically anarchist form of action expounded here. Moreover, interested though he had become in individual acts of revolt, he was still preoccupied with the more collective forms of action both at the trade union and communal level.

We do not know if the discussions of Kropotkin's report ever took place in the sections of the Jura Federation in the winter of 1879–80. Certainly, no document specifically relating to the policy of action emerged at the Congress of La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1880. The report, however, undoubtedly contained the essence of Kropotkin's later thinking on the question of revolutionary action even though there were changes in the importance he attached to individual acts of revolt, for he was always insistent on the need for a broad based and systematic work of propaganda and agitation for popular expropriation among the masses.

During 1880 Kropotkin became less preoccupied with collective action and this enthusiasm for acts of revolt by individuals and small

groups increased. To some extent this can be attributed to the influence of Elisée Reclus with whom he had now established a close friendship.[33]

By the autumn of 1878 Reclus had finally abandoned the somewhat eclectic and educational approach that had characterised his association with *Le Travailleur* of which Kropotkin had strongly disapproved.[34] With his letter to the Congress of Fribourg, he had adopted an uncompromisingly revolutionary position.

Unlike the Jurassians Reclus tended to see the revolutionary struggle less narrowly in terms of organised collective action. For in spite of his eloquent assertion, 'In isolation we can do nothing, whereas closely united we can transform the world', he envisaged collective action in terms of the loosely-associated action of committed anarchists: 'we associate ourselves one with another as free and equal men, working on a common task our mutual relations regulated by reciprocal justice and goodwill'. Moreover, he laid particular stress on the importance of the free action of the individual. 'We are anarchists, that is to say, men who want to keep full responsibility for their acts, who act by virtue of their rights and personal duties, who claim their full natural development as human beings, who have no one as master and are master of no one'.[35] Preoccupied as he was with the free associative action of individuals, he was deeply suspicious both of the broussist idea of involvement in the power struggle between local communes and the central government, and the narrowly syndicalist approach of the Swiss Jurassians. This may indeed explain why he had not attended the Congress of Fribourg in person, and had also absented himself from that at La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1879 in spite of the close association he had established with *Le Révolté* during the year. By the autumn of 1880, however, the Jura Federation was dominated by the more revolutionary anarchist element and Reclus was now able to play an important part in the proceedings. He expressed his view very firmly that 'The groups of revolutionary forces are set up freely outside all communal organisation', declaring 'we are no more communists than statists, we are anarchists, let us not forget it'. And he persuaded the Congress to reject a synthesis between the idea of the territorially-based commune and that of the commune based on trade union organisation proposed by the section of Courtelary.[36]

By the spring of 1880 there were clear indications that Kropotkin's ideas had undergone some modification as a result of Reclus' influence. In the autumn of 1879, at the congress of the Jura Federation, he had

been anxious that anarchists should decide what part to take in struggles between the communes and the state on the broussist assumption that the revolutionary commune would be established through the transformation of the territorial commune. In his article 'La Commune' in May 1880, he made it clear that this assumption had been abandoned for Reclus' broader and more radical vision of communes based on the free association of individuals. 'For us, "Commune" is no longer a territorial agglomeration; it is rather a generic name, a synonym for grouping equals, knowing neither frontiers nor high defensive walls . . . It is by free groups that the social Commune will be organised and these groupings will break down high defensive walls and frontiers.'[37] Such a discussion of the revolutionary commune with its stress on free associations also indicated that Kropotkin had distanced himself even more firmly from the syndicalist approach of the Swiss Jurassians.[38]

Kropotkin, it seems, had absorbed something of Reclus' individualist approach and would now perhaps be less inclined to see revolutionary action primarily in terms of collective action. In fact, Reclus who had been deeply moved by developments in Russia ('These nihilists are now the salt of the earth . . . and I blush when I compare myself to them,' he had declared to his brother in a letter of the summer of 1878)[39] seems to have had a rather more simple view of what revolutionary action should be than Kropotkin. An article possibly written by Reclus, appeared in *Le Révolté* in December 1879 in response to bourgeois condemnation of the violent actions of the oppressed, particularly in Russia, and urging the need to make common cause with the oppressed whatever action they might take:

> In society today you cannot be considered as an honest man by everybody.
>
> Either you are a robber, assassin and firebrand with the oppressors, the happy, and potbellied, or you are a robber, an assassin and a firebrand with the oppressed, the exploited, the suffering and the underfed.
>
> It is up to you, you indecisive and frightened men, to choose.
>
> And if you have in your heart the slightest human sentiment, hasten to do so, for at every instant capitalist oppression and exploitation claim new victims, and perpetrate new massacres.[40]

Such an appeal seems to reflect a theme of the Narodnaya Volya: 'We must fight, we must act. An honest man has no right to stand aside with his arms folded.'[41] Certainly, Reclus did not share Kropotkin's misgivings about the commitment of the Russian revolutionary movement to political terrorism with the virtual abandonment of efforts to stimu-

late popular action through work among the people that that tended to involve. And he may well have been impatient with Kropotkin's insistence on the need for an elaboration of an anarchist policy of action.

Undoubtedly Reclus' approach must have been a factor in the modification of Kropotkin's view of revolutionary action in 1879. The French anarchist geographer had made a deep and enduring impression on Kropotkin as a comrade whom he admired as much for his personal as for his intellectual qualities and he saw in Reclus a true anarchist who, more than anyone else he knew, contrived to live as an anarchist in a capitalist society.[42] Nevertheless, the extent of Reclus' influence on the development of Kropotkin's approach to revolutionary action at this period is uncertain. After all, it had been Kropotkin's enthusiasm and energy in successfully launching *Le Révolté* which had drawn Reclus into active involvement in the Jura Federation at the end of 1879; moreover, a letter from Reclus in 1882 suggests that Kropotkin was always the one most passionately concerned with action: 'I would deserve the reproaches of our friend Kropotkin, for being a revolutionary through principle, tradition and solidarity, I only concern myself in a very indirect way with the affairs of the revolution. Apart from a few articles, visits, a little oral propaganda and from time to time tokens of solidarity between friends, I am doing nothing.'[43] In fact, Kropotkin's approach was more directly and dramatically affected by events in Russia.

The response of the Russian government to attempts on the life of the Tsar had been particularly savage, with death penalties being imposed indiscriminately on those associated with the revolutionary party irrespective of whether or not they had been involved in the *attentats*. Kropotkin was appalled. After a spate of hangings at Kiev he published a particularly bitter and passionate protest at the beginning of April.[44] Meanwhile, he had rushed to the defence of Leo Hartmann who in March had been in danger of being extradited from France to Russia for suspected involvement in the attempt to blow up the royal train.[45] In fact, Kropotkin was just as outraged by the summary justice meted out to revolutionaries actually involved in terrorism, and in connection with the Trial of the Sixteen in November at St Petersburg did all he could through reports in *Le Révolté* to arouse sympathy and admiration for the terrorists involved.[46]

During 1880 he made no comment on the demand of the *Narodnaya Volya* for a liberal constitution and his complaint (November 1879) about the political preoccupations of the Russian movement was not

repeated. In October he reported that the *Narodnaya Volya* was now urging the necessity of terrorist action by the peasants against landlords, and he declared triumphantly: 'It is no longer a matter for our friends in Russia, of only make war on absolutism; they insist on the need to prepare the popular revolution at the same time.'[47] Apparently, he was now satisfied that the Russian movement was not concentrating on direct attacks on autocracy to the exclusion and neglect of popular agitation. Indeed, it seems likely that he had even begun to accept the necessity for political terrorism.

In February, his response to the explosion at the Winter Palace had been enthusiastic if not jubilant:

> The Executive Committee has kept its word; it has not allowed itself to be stopped by seemingly insurmountable difficulties. By carrying out an attentat which has faced difficulties such as have not been encountered since the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 in England, they have stripped the palace of its prestige, and they have proved that that edifice, guarded by a thousand men, watched, searched, surrounded by a wall of soldiers and spies is no longer a sure refuge.[48]

In September in an article entitled 'La Question agraire' he had declared that a disorganisation of the power of the state could trigger off a series of peasant revolts such as had preceded the French Revolution.[51] By the New Year of 1881 he was looking for an alliance of political revolutionaries and insurgent peasants to destroy the old monarchy. He had been deeply impressed by the way the Russian terrorists, through attacks on the Tsar in face of ferocious repression, had succeeded in generating fear and even panic among the ruling classes. And quite clearly his response to the revolutionary movement in Russia was an important factor in the development of his view of revolutionary action in Western Europe at this stage. In the first place, he actually seems to have come to the conclusion that regicide would trigger off a popular insurrection in countries like Spain and Italy. In January 1880 in response to a report from the Spanish Federation about the action of 1879, he claimed that the Spanish government's position was so insecure that had the recent attempt on the life of the King succeeded it could have provided the signal for a general insurrection.[50] In the New Year editorial of 1881 he was sure that a general uprising was about to break out in Italy in a situation where there had been a series of attempts on the life of the King – 'a real hunting down of the king' in which all opposition parties were united in their desire to overthrow monarchy. In the second place, perhaps more significantly, he accorded an importance to political *attentats* in his

discussion of recent developments at the beginning of 1881 such as he had not done in the previous New Year editorial which had focussed on the Congress of Marseilles and the revival of the socialist movement in France:

It was a very sad period for Europe, the seven years which followed the fall of the Paris Commune . . . the revolutionary idea was dormant in Europe.

Then 1879, the year of attentats, made its solemn warnings heard in Germany, Spain and Russia, the men of the people, suffocating in this stifling atmosphere, reduced to despair by the shadows that surrounded them, 'the unknown one' whose name is *The People* came to strike at the living personification of reaction, the crowned heads.

They were sacrificed, the forerunners of the revolutionary awakening, and they mounted the scaffold, or went to jail, followed by the curses of the reactionaries, the taunts of the traitors to the workers' cause, and the sympathies of the crowds.

But their blood did not flow in vain. Warning of the revolutionary idea had been given; henceforth, it became impossible to stand still, and the struggle had to be joined between the people, who were now tired of the situation, and seeking the way out of it, and the satiated, the exploiters of every sort, the rulers who oppose them.

The struggle indeed began. In Germany, in Russia, in Spain and in Italy, reaction confident in its forces, responded to the challenge it had received by a fight to the death. But, after 18 months or two years of struggle, it perceives with terror that far from gaining new strength through persecutions, it becomes weaker. Its blows no longer have the same boldness, it begins to give way, precisely at the moment when the least sign of weakness on its part becomes a mark of defeat.[51]

Kropotkin no doubt had in mind here the trials of the Italian internationalists in 1879–80, which had ended in acquittals amid scenes of popular rejoicing. Such an assessment of the significance of the *attentats* had already been implicit in his reactions to the acts of Passanante, Soloviev and even Hoedal, but this is the first time he had presented an analysis of the historical process leading to revolution in which *attentats* played such an important part. There can be little doubt that he was responding primarily to the impact of Russian terrorism on European society. Apart from the fact that the *attentats* in Germany, Italy and Spain probably owed a good deal to Russian inspiration, it was the audacity, skill and courage of the Russian terrorists which tended to colour public reaction to *attentats* in general. Indeed it is clear that it was the narodniks, with their spectacular bomb attacks, who had made the governing classes of Europe tremble and encouraged the oppressed, particularly in Italy and Spain, to recognise that those in power were vulnerable, in spite of their armies of police and bodyguards. Of course, Kropotkin's generalisations did not apply

equally to all the four countries he mentioned; in Germany there had, if anything, been a negative popular reaction to the *attentats* and the Social Democratic party had made haste to rid itself of its more radical elements in 1880; in Russia itself, there were few convincing signs of the development of a popular movement of revolt.[52] But the presentation of hopes and possibilities as certainties was always very much a feature of Kropotkin's style of propaganda.

At the same time, for all the importance he now attached to the *attentats* as a feature of the revolutionary awakening of the people, he was still more interested in economic than political terrorism in the developing revolutionary struggle and it would perhaps be more accurate to say that the Narodnaya Volya had stimulated Kropotkin's enthusiasm for terrorism in general rather than for political terrorism in particular. Even so, whether terrorism was economic or political, it tended to involve action by individuals and small groups rather than large-scale collective action. The anarchist movement however was not a closely knit disciplined organisation like the Narodnaya Volya and indeed a more individualist approach, partly due to the influence of Reclus, had emerged in the proceedings of the Congress of the Jura Federation in the autumn of 1880. Kropotkin inevitably, therefore, looked for action which was not only economic rather than political but also more spontaneous and less organised than that of the Russian terrorist movement, and at this point he turned for inspiration to developments in Spain and Italy. With obvious enthusiasm he described how in Spain there had been a proliferation of spontaneous acts of revolt from refusals to pay taxes and rents to burnings of plantations and factories: 'isolated acts always take place on a larger scale.' In Italy, he claimed, 'isolated acts . . . pass into a state of chronic disease, being repeated continually from one end of Italy to the other, popular riots with archive burnings occur without interruption throughout the kingdom.' He saw in these that there was a spontaneous awakening of the spirit of revolt among the masses which would lead to a general insurrection.

This is the awakening of the spirit of revolt – above all of economic revolt. Who has provoked it? Nobody could say. Everyone and no one. But the fact exists: this spirit is taking hold of Europe. Here, it impels a village groaning in misery, crushed by taxes, to lay hold of the *Maison Commune* and burn the tax rolls or property titles. There, it whispers in the ear of strikers: 'set fire to the factory, the place of suffering you have so long endured!' Here we see a landowner, there a tax collector, a policeman, a magistrate, falling under a peasant's knife or bullet . . .

> It is the people which speaks; it is the conscience which is outraged; it is their sufferings that make their cry of sorrow heard . . .
>
> Certainly it is not great events, but a whole series of little acts which are linked to each other, all bearing witness to one thing: it is no longer only in a few heads that the revolutionary idea is germinating, it is taking hold of the minds of the masses: the great day therefore approaches.

Kropotkin's general conclusion was that, with the revival of the revolutionary idea, on the one hand there had been a general awakening of sympathy for the anarchist idea, whilst on the other the development of the spirit of revolt among the masses had produced a much more revolutionary situation. He therefore called for anarchists to work ceaselessly with all their strength for the true revolution,[53] having already given a clear indication of what the anarchist role should be in this more revolutionary situation in his article, 'La Question agraire' of September 1880 in which he had first elaborated his vision of a mounting tide of economic terrorism in the countryside. 'Let us spread our ideas, let us disseminate writings by the handful which expound them, let us work to establish bonds which are still lacking between the villages and, come the day of the revolution, let us be able to fight with them and for them.'[54]

Kropotkin, it seems, expected the anarchists to provide a sort of cataylstic force to encourage a proliferation of acts of revolt and to coordinate the *isolated deeds* into a vast popular movement. It was undoubtedly with this in mind that he had written his famous 'Appeal to the Young' in the spring of 1880. Clearly, he felt that in order to fulfil their catalytic role, the anarchist movement needed activists with the energy and enthusiasm of youth. In that article, he had called on the young oppressed to join in the struggle, declaring that the very force of things impelled them to become socialists if only they had the courage to recognise it. At the same time, inspired partly by the heroism of the narodniks and more particularly the populism of the chaikovskists, he had also insisted that revolutionists needed the help of educated young people, who being outraged at social injustice, were prepared to join the struggle as comrades rather than leaders, putting their knowledge and skills at the service of the oppressed.

> Finally, all of you who possess knowledge and talents, if you have the courage, come therefore, both men and women, and put them at the service of those who have most need of them. And know that if you come, not as masters but comrades in the struggle; not to rule but to gain inspiration in a new milieu; less to instruct than to understand the aspirations of the masses, to divine and formulate them,

and then to work, without respite continually and with all the vigour of youth, to bring them to life – know that then and only then, will you have a full, meaningful life.[55]

Much of what Kropotkin was saying about the need to help with the people's own struggles as well as carrying on a systematic work of propaganda for anarchist ideas of expropriation, was only an elaboration of the views outlined in his report to the Congress of the Jura Federation in 1879. But his incresing preoccupation with *attentats* and isolated acts suggests he now saw the preparatory stage of the revolutionary struggle in terms which were more individualist and destructivist than before.

That is not to say that he had now lost interest in collective action which did not develop spontaneously out of isolated acts. At the end of 1879, he had probably been more positively orientated to organised trade union action than ever before because of developments in the French labour movement. In November 1879 the Congress of Marseilles had declared unequivocably for collectivisation – and this had elicited an excited response from *Le Révolté*. 'The importance of this resolution has escaped no one. All have understood that it would sound a rallying cry for socialism, not only in France, but throughout Europe . . . Today, it is no longer a little group which is raising the standard of expropriation; it is the proletariat . . . and, what has been said by the French proletarians will be heard and understood by those of all countries.'[56] In the new year editorial of 1880 he had declared that the revival of socialism in France had been the most important fact of the preceding year. And it was the increasingly socialist character of the developing French labour movement which perhaps more than anything else reinforced Kropotkin's conviction that there was a real resurgence of the revolutionary movement in Europe. During 1880, however, the anarchists lost ground to the guesdists and his enthusiasm for French trade unionism began to fade. In November, the Congress of Le Havre, for all its commitment to revolutionary action with anarchist communism as the final aim, adopted Guesde's Minimum Programme as a basis on which to fight the 1881 elections. This was a severe blow to the anarchists, and Kropotkin, in the New Year of 1881, even as he claimed that the trade union movement in France was becoming more revolutionary, had launched a fierce attack on the Minimum Programme and the involvement in elections as a betrayal of the socialist cause.[57] Certainly he still saw the revival of the workers' movement in the towns as an important development in Europe and

was even hopeful of a revival of the IWA as 'a formidable revolutionary weapon', but his optimism was now clouded by anxiety that bourgeois leaders were continuing to deflect the labour movement from the struggle of labour against capital, and he tended increasingly to see more immediate possibilities for revolutionary action outside the labour movement. Even so, his interest in and concern for the labour movement continued, for by now he had clearly recognised its potential for mass revolutionary action. Moreover, interested though he now was in terrorism, he did not see it either as a formula for instant revolution or a justification for indiscriminate violence. Other anarchists, however, were tending to do just that.

1880 had been a critical year for European anarchists, for just as they began to feel they were succeeding in securing some popular support for revolutionary socialism in France, Italy and even Germany their position was being undermined by parliamentarism.

In Germany, tensions had developed in the Social Democratic party: on the one hand, Most in *Freiheit* was adopting a more and more anti-parliamentary line, whilst on the other hand Hasselmann, a social democratic deputy in the Reichstag, refused to accept the moderate approach of Liebknecht in response to the anti-socialist laws. *Le Révolté* declared that there were inconsistencies between the language of Liebknecht in the Reichstag and the social democratic newspapers which indicated that the party leadership now represented the opinion of only a fraction of the party, and it saw in Hasselmann's speech to the Reichstag evidence of genuine revolutionary commitment which would please the workers.[58] To some extent all this was wishful thinking, but there can be no doubt that during 1880 the party leadership felt seriously threatened. Hasselmann and the more revolutionary element were making strenuous efforts to secure support and may even have established some sort of cell organisation in major cities. Meanwhile, Most had secured a fairly substantial readership for *Freiheit* in spite of the difficulties of publishing and distributing a paper from exile in London, and the launching of a paper *Der Sozialdemokrat* in September 1879 had done little to counteract the influence of the eloquent and fiery radical.

But anarchist hopes that the socialist movement would become more frankly revolutionary and anarchist were short-lived. Hasselmann and Most were expelled from the party at the secret congresses held at Wyden in August 1880, and by the end of the year whatever cell organisation the revolutionaries may have managed to establish seems to

have been smashed by the police.[59] *Freiheit* survived and continued to be circulated in Germany, but although now frankly anarchist, from December 1880 when it published an article 'Durch Terrorismus zur Freiheit', it began to advocate a terrorist form of propaganda by deed in terms of increasingly savage and indiscriminate violence. The determination of the German Social Democratic Party to remove any threat to its parliamentary approach had driven revolutionaries towards anarchism, but an anarchism increasingly infused with an uncritical enthusiasm for violence generated by the daring exploits of the narodniks.[60]

In Italy, the anarchists fared rather better than they had done in Germany. The authorities had been morally discredited by the failure of their fairly scurrilous efforts to secure convictions against revolutionaries, whilst a secret meeting of the Italian Federation at Chiasso in December 1880 had declared unequivocably for insurrectionary tactics and anarchist communism. But the organisation of the Federation had been fatally weakened by persecution. At the same time divisions were opening up in the movement between those who adhered firmly to the revolutionary position and those who feared the isolation that might ensue from a rigorous insistence on revolutionary tactics and ideals. As early as the summer of 1879, Costa, in an open letter to his friends in the Romagna, had seemed to declare for a more gradualist approach. In March 1880 he had attended the socialist conference at Bologna, which had adopted a gradualist position, and in May, with the cooperation of moderates like Bertrand, Malon and Vollmar, he had launched the review *Rivista Internazionale del Socialismo* which was eclectic in approach and committed itself to the electoral tactic.[61] In Costa's absence (he was in prison in France at this time) the revolutionary position had been firmly upheld at the Congress of Chiasso, but anxiety about the threat of a more gradualist approach was betrayed in the insistence that the Congress rejected all minimum and practical programmes.[62] And the gradual abandonment of an anarchist revolutionary position by people like Costa and his companion Kulisciov in the face of severe repression now inspired some Italian revolutionaries like those in Germany to emulate the narodniks by advocating fairly indiscriminate acts of violence against the ruling capitalist class. In December 1880 Cafiero's much-quoted article denouncing parliamentary tactics and advocating acts of violence against the capitalist class appeared in *Le Révolté*. 'Our action has to be permanent revolt by the spoken and written word, the sword,

dynamite or even sometimes the voting paper, where it means voting for the ineligible Blanqui and Trinquet. We are consistent: we use a weapon the moment we have to strike as rebels. Everything is good for us which is not legality.'[63]

In France, the success of the guesdists began to alienate the anarchists from the labour movement and inspired by the Russian terrorists they too tended to adopt a more extreme violent position to counteract parliamentarism. Jean Grave, for example, in his speech against involvement in electoral struggles at the Congrès du Centre in July 1880 had declared, 'all the money spent in appointing deputies would be more wisely used to buy dynamite to blow them up'.[64]

Kropotkin was disturbed by all this. Yet most accounts of anarchism closely associate him with the increasing obsession with violence and the terrorist form of propaganda by deed in the anarchist movement of this time, and Cafiero's article on action is quoted to illustrate the point. In fact, although published in *Le Révolté*, this article was uncharacteristic of the paper's editorials, and was intended according to Nettlau as a criticism of its restrained approach.[65] Indeed, it is quite clear that a sharp disagreement was developing between Kropotkin and Cafiero over the question of tactics. As a consequence of this, the relationship between the two revolutionaries was very strained, particularly after the assassination of Alexander II. And in May, Kropotkin wrote an anguished letter about the quarrel to Malatesta. He warned that a policy exclusively concerned with violence against those associated with the government would turn the next revolution into a useless massacre, and insisted that what was needed was a core of resolute men of action to prepare the economic struggle:

> He spoke to me about the action in Italy and I tried to make him see that if the socialist party threw itself exclusively into the killing of policemen and war against the government, the next revolution would be a new massacre of little use to the people, whereas I have the firm conviction that if a core of resolute men (provided it has the necessary means) holds firm in the preparation of the economic struggle, the next revolution will be accompanied by acts of social revolution, by the abolition of individual property.
>
> Because, at the moment, I produce a moderate paper, he thinks I will always do so. It is impossible to persuade him of the contrary, except that when he sees me do it, he will be sorry for what he has said.
>
> . . . You yourself understand how much Charles's letters have depressed and saddened me. For two days I have been quite sick about it. In the first place, I love Charles and I have always been a man of feeling. You know that I am guided by feeling, and you will understand how much these letters – so nasty at bottom – have

saddened me. Besides, apart from the question of feeling, it is too bad to see for oneself that even between us there is no union, friendship and trust!

I always hope that Charles will go back on his words and I am sure that it is agitation which has dictated his letters. I do not understand how he is able to believe them.[66]

Obviously, Cafiero was showing signs of the mental illness which was to incapacitate him so tragically the following year, so it is important not to exaggerate the significance of this quarrel. Even so, the Italian had been expressing a view of tactics shared by other Italian anarchists so Kropotkin's reaction must to some extent reflect his response to the more violent elements in the Italian movement. Kropotkin also seems to have been anxious about the extremist element in the French anarchist movement at this time, particularly as expressed in the *Révolution Sociale*, a paper which from its very first issues had been obsessed with violence. In February 1811 he warned Cafiero against writing for such a paper, declaring that it should be left to die. It seems he feared that such violent propaganda would damage the movement by provoking repression.[67] He also apparently had reservations about a policy of terrorism in a situation where the anarchist movement did not have either the financial or the practical skill to carry out a serious terrorist campaign. Thoroughly disgusted by the attempt of the *Révolution Sociale* to elevate the attempt in June to blow up Thiers' statue into a great revolutionary act to inaugurate a policy of propaganda by deed by the French Executive Committee after the style of the Narodnaya Volya who had recently assassinated the Tsar, he declared, 'To undertake a serious conspiracy, money is necessary and we do not have it. It would therefore be only little practical jokes like the sardine tins at Thiers' statue elevated into a prodigious act by *La Révolution Sociale*.'[68] But it was not only a question of money – the successful terrorist, in Kropotkin's view, needed to have military skills: 'Do you know what would still be of the greatest importance for us?' he declared to Malatesta. 'Riflemen. Oh! if only we had them in our sections, Soloviev would not have failed in his aim, the houses and barns of the nobility would have fallen long ago.' Nevertheless, for all his anxieties about anarchist obsessions with violence, in the spring of 1881 after the assassination of Alexander II, Kropotkin seriously began to consider the possibility of the anarchist movement embarking upon a programme of terrorism.

The assassination had sent shock waves through European society. The ruling classes were unnerved by it. The German Emperor tried to

get European states to agree to joint action against political reform. The anarchists were jubilant about the assassination. It reinforced belief in the efficacy of the bomb at a time when they were becoming increasingly anxious about the drift of anti-authoritarian socialists towards parliamentarism.[69] And in May, the French anarchists broke away from the National Workers' Congress in Paris, denouncing parliamentarism and declaring for propaganda by deed.[70]

The assassination of Alexander II had a dramatic effect on Kropotkin himself. When the news first came through, he declared enthusiastically that the narodniks had struck a mortal blow at autocracy by showing that the Tsar could no longer massacre the people with impunity, and he hailed the deed as an immense step towards the next revolution:

> It is certain that the event at the Catherine canal has delivered a mortal blow to autocracy. Prestige evaporates before a phial of nitroglycerine and it is now established that the people can no longer be massacred with impunity: the oppressed are learning how to defend themselves . . .
>
> Whatever comes of it, one thing is certain – what happened on the 13 March is an immense step towards the next revolution in Russia, and those who have done it, will watch out to see that the blood of the martyrs is not to be shed in vain.[71]

Outraged at the attempt of the bourgeois press to present Alexander as the martyred liberator of the serfs and the narodniks as evil murderers, Kropotkin rushed to the defence of the latter as he had done on previous occasions. This time he was particularly incensed by claims in the press that the violence in Russia had been due, not to the activities of a native revolutionary movement, but to conspiracies organised by leaders in foreign countries.

> To dare to affirm that the thousands of men and women who have sacrificed the joys of liberty friends and life to the cause – that those who have given up everything, a whole world, to help the Russian people rid themselves of the oppressors that devour them: to dare to affirm that these heroes were only the instruments of someone else – is to insult men whose names humanity will one day pronounce with veneration.

He insisted that the revolutionary party drew its strength, not from leaders, but from the terrible situation in Russia itself, from the dedicated efforts of those from all classes who were determined to secure a better future for the people, and the sympathy it met in all classes of society.

> The strength of the Russian revolutionary party is not in its leaders. It is in the abominable situation of our society . . . It is the unbounded devotion of the men

who are marching towards a better future. It is in the moral and intellectual forces constantly put at the service of the revolution by the cream of the people, workers, peasants and youth from the schools . . . it is finally in the sympathy that they find in all classes of society, even among executioners.[72]

All this indicated a remarkably strong degree of sympathy and support for the Narodnaya Volya. But he had made no comment about the letter of the Executive Committee to Alexander III demanding a constitution, and all the comments stressed the populist aspect of the Russian movement. Moreover, it is significant that in a pamphlet he wrote at this time to denounce the brutal executions of those implicated in the killing of the Tsar, he stressed the populist preoccupations of Sophie Perovskaya: 'From the attitude of the crowd, she understood that she had delivered a mortal blow to autocracy, and she read in the sad looks turned towards her a more terrible blow from which Russian autocracy will never recover.' Such was Kropotkin's comment on Perovskaya's death – a comment which, for all its enthusiasm for the *attentat*, was strongly tinged with populist sentiment. And indeed it is clear that Kropotkin wished to pay tribute to Sophie Perovskaya first and foremost as a populist agitator. 'She preferred to work in the midst of the people; it is in the midst of the peasants and workers she would wish to remain . . . Whilst organising the last *attentat*, she took part in workers' meetings, distributed the *Journal Ouvrier*, established groups, and organised the defence of workers' groups against the spies which surround them.'[73]

On the other hand, an article did appear in *Le Révolté* at the end of April, which seemed to identify the anarchist movement much more closely with the approach of the Narodnaya Volya than Kropotkin had done in either his letter or pamphlet.[74] Indeed, the writer of this article bent over backwards to give an anarchist interpretation to the actions of the Russian terrorists, even to the point of describing the letter to Alexander III as a clever tactic unrelated to propaganda: 'They are writing there for the needs of the struggle and not for the needs of propaganda.' The members of the Executive Committee were quite clearly fundamentally anarchist, for they had identified with and acted in the name of the people, as Bakunin had said revolutions should. Anarchism for the present meant simply an incessant struggle against authority in all its manifestations – everything else related to the future.

Kropotkin clearly did not share these views. In fact there is strong evidence that the article was one written by Cafiero of which he was critical. In a letter to Malatesta on 4 May (i.e. a few days after the

appearance of the 'Danger' article) Kropotkin discussed an editorial received from Cafiero:

> I have received his editorial and at the same time I know the men, I know their attachments . . . I regret that I have not translated for you the words of Jelabov who denies any links with the anarchists, ('we were anarchists,' he says, 'before 1874. That is an old story.'), who repudiates them, who finds the Swiss to federalist and who says that Morozov's pamphlet is a blunder and that the Executive Committee is very unhappy that such things have been published abroad, etc., etc.
>
> Yes, certainly, the Bakuninist tradition is broken in Russia, because I am sure that Bakunin himself would have said: The bomb is too little to destroy the autocratic colossus. Kill the property owners at the same time, prepare the rising of the peasants'[75]

Quite clearly, Kropotkin was fairly sceptical towards Cafiero's explanation of the letter to Alexander III, and rejected any suggestion that the Executive Committee was in any true sense anarchist. Indeed he still held firmly to his belief in the necessity of precipitating an economic struggle in the countryside, and showed little sympathy for Cafiero's preoccupation with violent action of any sort against all authority.

But even though he was disturbed by the narrowly political nature of Russian terrorism, Kropotkin went on to say that the assassination had stirred the populists into action in the countryside. Undoubtedly, he hoped that there would be a development of the revolutionary struggle in which political terrorism would be backed up by revolutionary action among the peasants.

> The entire active element is terrorist and wants to kill the tsar. The entire inactive element is with the popularists and stays with folded arms in the villages. But after 13 March it is understood that it is impossible to go on like this and the popularists are also very active. What is needed now is to prove that the terrorist party will not make the revolution alone and that it is necessary to stir up the villages.

Kropotkin was impressed by the successful assassination of the Tsar. At the same time, he was dreadfully anxious about the influence of the social democrats and how little had been done to counteract this by the resolute action of militants in preparing the economic struggle: 'I am irritated to see how little of this sort of action there is anywhere. Now as formerly the social democratic leaders unnerve me because of it.' Obviously eager to refute Cafiero's taunts that he was too moderate, he began to examine the possibility of some sort of conspiratorial action by the anarchist movement. He argued that immediately after the suppression of *L'Avant-Garde*, it had been necessary to concentrate on building up an anarchist party in France, and there had been no

question of organising a serious conspiracy in that situation. But now, with the group gathered round *Le Révolté*, he suggested that conspiratorial action, if still not possible in Switzerland, could be organised in a country like France or Italy, where some sort of conspiratorial organisation already existed. 'However,' he concluded, 'I have learned one good thing from the heated correspondence with Charles. That is that the moment comes where we must think of a "serious conspiracy" and certainly I would have liked nothing better, and we definitely do have to think about it – and act as a result. I think that Italy in particular has reached this point.'

Kropotkin put forward his ideas about conspiratorial action in the first months of 1881 in correspondence relating to the proposed Congress of London. Ideas he outlined in a letter to a Belgian comrade at the end of February[76] were developed in proposals for discussion in a circular letter in June to Malatesta, Cafiero and Schwitzguébel. He suggested that two levels of organisation were necessary, one which would be open and based on the IWA, and one which would be secret. 'I think we need two organisations; one open, vast, and functioning openly: the other secret intended for action.' The basis for the secret organisation, he argued, already existed in the old *intimité* of the International (the small grouping which had continued to exercise an important influence on the ideological development of the Anti-authoritarian International).[77] And he maintained that all that was necessary was to augment this group by recruiting into it all skilful and active conspirators as they appeared. He proposed the setting up of a clandestine journal in London under Malatesta's editorship as a link between all the groups, rather than the creation of any sort of central committee which would only take leading activists away from their work in their own countries.

It is clear that if the secret organisation must be *national* and that the international bond must be as *secret* as the organisation itself. I do not see any other way than to return to the international brothers. The cadre exists: it only needs to be strengthened. There is Henry, Charles, Adhémar, Louis, Rodriguez, [?]Mendoza. If it is doing nothing as an international group – that is because it is too small, it is therefore necessary to strengthen it with new elements.

I believe in general that a committee for organisation (or for information which is the same thing) would only be harmful, unless it were composed of men each of whom is the most active on the spot in his own country. A committee sitting in London, Brussels, Paris, Geneva or anywhere – would only be harmful.

It must be composed of those who know how to work on the spot. I would propose therefore quite simply to strengthen the group we have already set up with

half a dozen good active young conspirators and men of action, and to strengthen it continually as new men on the spot emerge.

So that this link may find expression in something tangible, I propose a *secret* paper in London to which each member of the group will be obliged to send his monthly correspondence. To leave the thing working, there would be Henry who would concern himself with it, and then if he left, it would be the first decent man we could count on to come along provided he could do the job and here too, there must be no committee. Henry would be made responsible for it and he must find the men he needs and that is all.[78]

The clandestine groups would organise economic terrorism – an activity more effective, in Kropotkin's view, than the propaganda of congresses. 'The secret groups would take responsibility for the workers' conspiracy to blow up a factory, "cool down" [*tranquilliser*] an employer or foreman, etc., etc., something that would with advantage replace the propaganda at congresses.' This could be interpreted as a declaration for propaganda by deed, but in fact it more likely represents Kropotkin's frustration over the ineffectiveness of recent congresses, where resolutions had produced little positive action. Nevertheless, Kropotkin was clearly now ready to promote terrorist action in the anarchist movement to supplement the spontaneous but isolated revolutionary action of individuals and small groups among the masses. The international organisation he envisaged was secret, very small and informal, and it was intended neither to overtake nor replace the development of mass action through the open organisaition of the IWA. The vast majority of workers who supported or sympathised with the revolutionary movement, Kropotkin argued, could not be involved in a secret organisation, but they were ready for militant strike action and could not be left to the mercies of the parliamentarians. An *Internationale Gréviste* could assemble working-class forces in mass action to transform strikes into riots.

The secret organisation may be the affair of very restricted groups. Do the great masses therefore have to be ignored and left absolutely alone? Do they have to be abandoned entirely to the politicians . . .

I do not see any other field of action for all those who cannot join in secret groups, than the grouping under the flag of the Strikers' International. It is only through this that the forces of labour, the masses, can be successfully grouped together.

Moreover, I do not see anything inconvenient in this. The strike is no longer war with arms folded. The grouping continually takes on the task of turning it into a riot.[79]

Far from being more important than the *Internationale Gréviste* the

secret organisation would be dependent on it. 'I firmly believe therefore, *with all my heart* in the absolute necessity of reconstructing an organisation for resistance. It will provide forces, money and a place for secret groups'. Kropotkin was insisting very firmly on the primacy of the economic struggle of the masses.

These proposals obviously reflect an important development in Kropotkin's ideas about tactics, for he had never before put forward detailed proposals about organisation for action. Malatesta, however, responded by suggesting that there should be three levels of organisation in the International. As well as the *Intimité*, which would consist of those in total agreement over the programme and the organisation for the struggle against capital (and should not be as secret and closed as Kropotkin had suggested), there should be a revolutionary league, which would be an association of revolutionaries, who, whilst firmly retaining their right to pursue their different programmes, would work together in promoting insurrection against governments.[80] Being strongly opposed to any submerging of ideological differences as suggested by the Belgians, he nevertheless felt that recognition of the differences between revolutionaries should not prevent them working together towards the common aim of revolution. He insisted that if they did not establish a revolutionary league others would create one without them or against them. Kropotkin agreed that if the setting up of a revolutionary league was inevitable, they would have to support it but he did not like the idea at all. Neither, for that matter, did Cafiero. Both pointed out the lack of funds to mount a serious international conspiracy, and argued that an International League was quite unsuitable for such an activity because of the danger of the police intercepting and reading the substantial correspondence involved. 'It is not in an International League, with endless letters read by the police that the conspiracy will be mounted – it will be mounted by isolated groups.'[81] Kropotkin also thought that it was not possible to sustain both an International League and the IWA, because they would be competing with each other for the support of the workers' societies. He declared that the league would be still-born. Clearly, he was alarmed by a proposal which, in his view, would detract from the direct struggle against capital. Anxious both to deflect Malatesta from the idea of a revolutionary league, and to reach an understanding with his friends before the Congress, he finally suggested, with little conviction and some misgiving, that an addition should be made to the statutes of the IWA:

All this is very sad and discouraging.

Could we not deal with this difficulty by adding to the statutes of the International a declaration like this. 'Every political struggle should be subordinated to the economic struggle.' The International nevertheless recognises that the struggle against the existing institutions that give strength to the capitalist exploiter is now part of the programme of the International.

I do not know however, if this correction will be accepted and *if it is right to make it.*

Kropotkin was particularly concerned that the *Intimité* should adopt some sort of united front at the London Congress, since for a long time he had had misgivings about the way it was being organised.

The calling of a congress with the aim of reorganising the IWA had been proposed by the Belgians at the Revolutionary Congress at Verviers on Christmas Day 1880. In a letter to the correspondent in Brussels in January 1881 he had attached considerable importance to successful implementation of the Belgian proposal because he thought that a reconstituted International would provide the national and international support the French anarchists needed to continue to counteract the influence of the state socialists.[82] A further letter to the Brussels correspondent in February, however, reveals that a dramatic change had taken place in his attitude.

He complained bitterly about the organisers publishing information about the Congress in journals without communicating directly with the groups and federations themselves. 'I absolutely condemn the habit nowadays of arranging everything between editors of papers, who set themselves up as leaders, whilst workers' organisations remain on one side.' He was also angry about the failure to produce detailed proposals for discussion at the Congress. 'It is not enough for some persons to say *that they* are going to reorganise the International Workingmen's Association in London (by being sure to formulate a single practical proposal); we must know if the International wants *to be* reorganised and in what way it wants to change its statutes and mode of action. And if there is a place for changing them.' Finally, he insisted that most of the discussions needed to establish the sort of organisation within the IWA he proposed could not be conducted in an open Congress where there would be spies present. The IWA could be transformed into an *Internationale Gréviste* by simply adding something about the primacy of the economic struggle to the statutes but the small, well-organised secret grouping that needed to be linked to it could only be created by

detailed serious discussion at a secret meeting. The Congress was therefore doomed from the start. 'Very well! The Congress is a failed Congress.' he had declared. 'It is not frankly revolutionary enough to be a meeting of conspirators who know each other. It is not, either, a Congress intended for the public which would make a great deal of noise, impressive because of the number of delegates.' Faced with a situation where the social democrats were expected to try to establish a non-revolutionary workers' international in which workers groups would only concern themselves with 'minimumism', they would have to make the best of a bad job and do what they could. 'Let us go to London, let us cut a pathetic figure in the eyes of Europe, but at least let us agree there to call together a serious Congress with many workers' organisations and agree amongst a few of us to set up a secret entente.'[83]

In a letter in June to Malatesta he had again criticised the organising committee, protesting angrily at its ineffectiveness and declaring that the *Révolution Sociale* and the Belgians were taking over everything.[84] He disliked the shadowy and evasive nature of the committee's circulars which were signed by someone using a pseudonym. And he was dismayed at the delegation of the responsibility for producing the Congress *Bulletin* to the Belgians in Brussels without any reference to *Le Révolté.* On the one hand he was offended by the implied criticism of the latter, whilst on the other he had little or no confidence in the Belgians. In the circular letter to Malatesta, Cafiero and Schwitzguébel he warned that the *Bulletin* was being produced by a blanquist group intent on promoting an authoritarian structure in the revolutionary party.

In the same letter, he expressed suspicions that members of the organising committee belonged to Brousse's International Club, which was a group of exiles without party attachments seeking to become leaders of the revolutionary movement by establishing themselves as a central committee in London.[85] He maintained also that both Marx and Serraux were trying to establish a central committee they could eventually control. And he warned that if he and his friends did not do something about it, people like Serraux and Chauvière (the Belgian editor of the *Bulletin*) under pressure from marxists on one side and blanquists on the other, would dominate the Congress. He lamented the fact that because the anarchist party was going through a critical period of reconstruction it could offer no alternative centre to London,

and even suggested that it would be better to have no congress at all than risk the havoc that would be produced in the revolutionary party by the authoritarian tendencies of the congress organisers.

It was in a mood of rising suspicion and misgiving, therefore, that Kropotkin, desperately anxious to reach some agreement with his friends about what line to take at the Congress, put forward his proposals about organisation and tactics. He insisted that they were only suggestions which could be modified as a result of comments from the others. He does not seem, however, to have been very hopeful of reaching an agreement in this way, for he ended his letter on a distinctly pessimistic note. 'In this way we will be able at least to understand each other. For my part, I confess that up to the present I am in the dark. I embrace you warmly, dear friends, particularly as it seems to me we are approaching a moment which will be decisive for us.'

Malatesta, in setting out his proposals, endeavoured to reassure Kropotkin that the danger from the authoritarian socialists was not as serious as he believed it to be in spite of the sinister influence of Serraux and the stupidity of the Belgians. He pointed out that, to his personal knowledge, neither Brocher nor the other members of the organising committee were authoritarian socialists, whilst the marxists had abandoned Brousse's International Club because of its suspected support for the Congress and, in fact, would be delighted to see it fall. The blanquist, Chauvière, had taken responsibility for the *Bulletin* simply because he had a printing press but he would not write it all; listing the pieces already to be included, Malatesta argued that there would be very little space for 'blanquist mythologies' in the first issue. He insisted that the anarchists would dominate the proceedings and the authoritarian tendency would be resisted. Unfortunately, the contents of the first issue of the *Bulletin* (15 June 1881) did nothing to allay Kropotkin's agitation. As well as Malatesta's article, it contained a piece by Chauvière urging a spirit of compromise at the forthcoming Congress. 'To organise ourselves means to give up, during the period of struggle, a part of our aspirations, a little of our relative independence, which otherwise, would divide us and leave us at the mercy of our oppressors. Let us veil for an instant the status of liberty so as not to be slaves tomorrow; let us suffer a little for the future; our cause is well worth that . . . '[86] This provoked a particularly scathing reply from Kropotkin in *Le Révolté*:

We can assure the editors of the *Bulletin* that it is certainly not in order to veil the statue of liberty or to give up a part of their aspirations or finally to give themselves

over to Committees inspired by authoritarianism, that the revolutionaries will be going to London. They know only too well the value of authoritarian organisations, and they know that everything which has been done recently to reconstitute the revolutionary party has been done thanks to spontaneous initiative and the free action of groups. They will not go to destroy all that in London.

Kropotkin remained profoundly apprehensive. And, as we have seen, in his anxiety to reach an understanding with his friends before the Congress, he made a half-hearted attempt to accommodate Malatesta's proposals.

The group remained divided. Schwitzguébel favoured Malatesta's ideas. Cafiero, to Kropotkin's consternation, finally refused to have anything to do with any of it. Pindy declared pessimistically that he would wait to be roused from his torpor by a popular movement which he hoped would not come too late.[87] Malatesta and Kropotkin, although united in their opposition to the authoritarian elements, finally ended up adopting clearly opposed positions on the question of tactics and organisation at the Congress of London.

7

The Congress of London 1881 and 'the spirit of revolt'

The object of convoking the Congress of London had been to revive the International which had languished in the repressive atmosphere following the fall of the commune and the quarrels that had developed amongst the internationalists themselves. The proposal for the Congress came from the *Bureau Fédéral de L'Union Révolutionnaire Belge.* Unfortunately, the very fact that the initiative came from Belgium may have generated some misgivings because of the abortive efforts of the Parti Socialiste Belge (PSB) to unite the socialist movement there. Certainly from the beginning, as Kropotkin's correspondence with his friends suggests, there was an atmosphere of suspicion and tension in anarchist circles about the proposed Congress. Indeed at the outset the Spanish Federation, even though agreeing to participate, had complained about the proposal to *revive* the IWA arguing indignantly that it still existed in Spain and elsewhere.[1]

In fact, Kropotkin's assertion that the Congress might be disastrous for the movement proved distressingly near the truth. Although the marxist and blanquist authoritarian influences which Kropotkin had feared most do not seem to have materialised, there can be little doubt that the sinister influence of Serraux did a great deal of damage by fostering a near hysterical obsession with violence. At the same time, the delegates, who in their anxiety to avoid any taint of authoritarianism seemed unable to decide whether they really wanted an organisation or not, set up a corresponding bureau which had no clear role except to help the groups keep in touch with one another.[2] A not altogether surprising development, in view of the fact that Kropotkin and Malatesta themselves had added to the tension of the debates by adopting totally conflicting positions about what sort of decentralised organisation the IWA should now be.

Malatesta held firmly to his idea of the IWA as a clandestine revol-

utionary organisation to fight the state, which he had outlined in his correspondence with Kropotkin in June. He declared that the aim of the internationalists should be to create 'a powerful instrument to attack society violently and defend revolutionary interests,' and he expressed his belief that the IWA, containing within it secretly organised and federated groups for action, 'suits our aim perfectly'. He insisted that more importance should be given to the struggle against governments by the IWA than previously because the main enemy was the state, which maintained and protected the system of economic oppression:

> The revolutionary programme of this association, however, must be emphasised and more importance given to what is called the political side, that is to say, the struggle against governments. The International as an organisation has in general concerned itself exclusively with the economic struggle. I am far from refusing to recognise economic oppression as the main cause of all oppression, but we must not forget that the State is the protector of property and that we shall get at the property owner only by passing over the body of the policeman.

Malatesta obviously believed that the power of the state embodied in the government was the principal obstacle to the socialisation of wealth, so that the first priority was to transform the IWA into a conspiratorial organisation to fight governments with the idea of setting off a popular insurrection to overthrow them.

Kropotkin's hostility to the position adopted by Malatesta seems to have hardened since the spring when he had made his half-hearted suggestion of compromise. And he responded with a flat rejection of his friend's proposals, declaring that a narrow political struggle against the state implied the creation of a hierarchical party of conspirators to take power and declare a revolution. 'If we think, for example, that it is enough to overthrow the government, to put ourselves in its place and decree the revolution, we could set ourselves up as an army of conspirators, with all the characteristics of the old secret societies with their leaders and deputy leaders.' He maintained that a future revolution would be sabotaged by the bourgeoisie unless the masses themselves struck at the system of private property:

> We believe that, if the next revolution is not to be conjured away by the bourgeoisie, a decisive blow will have to be administered to private property: from the beginning, the workers will have to proceed to take over all social wealth so as to put it into common ownership. This revolution can only be carried out by the workers themselves: it can only be made when the workers of the towns and the peasants, in revolt against any government, in each locality, in each town, in each

village, take over *themselves* the wealth belonging to the exploiters, without waiting for this benefit to be granted by some government or other.

In order to do this, the masses had to build up their own organisation: 'The great mass of workers will not only have to constitute itself outside the bourgeoisie, but it will have to take action of its own during the period which will precede the revolution . . . and this sort of action can only be carried out when a strong *workers' organisation* exists.' Revolutionaries must try to organise the masses by helping to translate popular hatreds and aspirations into action:

It is the mass of workers we have to seek to organise. We, the little revolutionary groups, have to submerge ourselves in the organisation of the people, be inspired by their hatreds, their aspirations, and help them to translate those aspirations and hatreds into actions. When the mass of workers is organised and we are with it to strengthen its revolutionary idea, to make the spirit of revolt against capital germinate there – and the opportunities for that will not be wanting – then we shall be entitled to hope that the next revolution will not be conjured away as the revolutions of the past have been: then it will be the social revolution.

Essentially, the general concept of organisation and tactics here is much the same as in Kropotkin's circular letter.[3] But on this occasion he had publicly taken issue with Malatesta on the question, and he had done it much more aggressively, insisting that the Italian approach would lead to a betrayal of the interests of the workers. Basically, Kropotkin rejected the view that a conspiratorial struggle against governments could result in the destruction of the power of the state; he believed that this could only be brought about by a genuinely popular struggle to destroy the economic system which gave the state its power and *raison d'être*.

The differences in approach between Kropotkin and Malatesta, which had persisted in spite of, and perhaps partly as a result of, the pre-congress discussions, undoubtedly contributed to the fraught atmosphere of the Congress.[4] But important though it was, this disagreement was overshadowed by Kropotkin's struggle to counteract the delegates' preoccupation with indiscriminate violence which was fostered by Serraux. Indeed the main significance of any tension between the two friends at this point was that it tended to separate Kropotkin from an important ally in a struggle in which he may well have come close to finding himself isolated.[5]

The trouble began when a committee of the Congress delegated to draw up a pact of federation for the new phase in the life of the International, advised the adoption of the preamble and statutes of the IWA

of 1866 and 1873 with an additional declaration. Serraux asked for the suppression of the word 'morality' from the statutes.[6] As might have been expected this provoked a passionate response from Kropotkin who apparently took a prominent part in the heated debate which followed. Writing about this many years later, Brocher described what happened:

Kropotkin was constantly on the go. From nine in the morning till midnight, with an hour's interruption, at midday for dinner, in an overheated atmosphere, filled with tobacco smoke, Kropotkin energetically defended his ideal. He had the majority of the Congress against him: Malatesta, Louise Michel, Emile Gautier, Victorine Rouchy, Chauvière, Miss Lecomte of Boston, Tchaikowski, Ganz of Mexico, etc. No one wanted to accept the definition of revolutionary morality, a definition which meant so much to Kropotkin, that it made him neglect even the organisation of the International which was the original aim of the Congress. Nevertheless, our friend had such persuasive eloquence that after three days of debate the Congress unanimously accepted the ideas it had previously rejected.[7]

This suggests that Kropotkin had to fight very hard to win the majority over to his point of view. In fact, Brocher's account is probably a simplification of what occurred. The committee certainly gave Kropotkin firm support in insisting that the statutes should not be changed:

The Committee proposes that there should be no change to the preamble. If we wanted to revise it, it would be necessary to strike out the words of justice and truth which could give rise to the same misunderstandings as the word 'morality'. This preamble is an historical monument which marked a new phase in the revolutionary development of the proletariat. We now take up again the tradition of the International, in emphasising its action from the revolutionary point of view.

The final decision, however, was a compromise; whilst the delegates agreed not to change the statutes they did add a declaration which included a clarification of the meaning of 'morality'. Brocher's account suggests that Kropotkin's view of revolutionary morality triumphed, but the declaration that emerged from the discussions was at best ambiguous:

They [the delegates] declare – in agreement, above all with the meaning which the International has always given to the word morality, this word as used in the preamble is not used in the sense that the bourgeoisie gives it but in the sense that since present society is based on immorality, it will be the abolition of the latter by every means, that will lead us to morality . . . the time has come to pass from the period of affirmation to the period of action, and to unite verbal and written propaganda, whose inefficacy has been demonstrated, with propaganda by deed and insurrectionary action.[8]

Undoubtedly, the idea that the abolition of present-day society by every means would lead to morality, could have ruled out purely political acts of violence, since, according to Kropotkin's argument, such action would not effectively destroy the prevailing social and economic system. On the other hand, it is equally clear that those who did not agree with Kropotkin would have felt free to adopt any tactic whatsoever. Moreover, as has already been shown Kropotkin had little sympathy for the notion of propaganda by deed, and much as he urged the necessity for action he certainly did not believe that verbal and written propaganda had proved ineffective.

Brocher's account of Kropotkin's behaviour and the response of the other delegates at the Congress was not, therefore, altogether accurate, but it probably conveys a clearer impression of Kropotkin's role on this occasion than the dry report in *Le Révolté* in which Kropotkin had virtually expurgated the details of his conflict with Serraux and his supporters. Brocher's comments also suggest that the morality question was closely linked with others in which Kropotkin found himself in conflict with a large majority of delegates.

There was the occasion when a session devoted to the revolutionary press was interrupted by a proposal of the Mexican delegate for promoting the study of chemistry and military sciences in the sections. Kropotkin had been dismayed by the sheer irresponsibility of such a suggestion. While conceding that technical knowledge was important to the movement he declared that it could not be acquired willy nilly in a few lessons, and insisted on the urgent need for increasing the propaganda of underground newspapers, little circulars and posters in the face of heavy censorship of the press. Tactics involving chemistry and electricity involved the service of experts as the Russian socialists had shown, he argued, and if the sections needed experts they would have to encourage those with the capacity of studying technology seriously, to go and work in the appropriate factories to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. Kropotkin obviously did not want the resources of the movement to be squandered in encouraging pointless fiascos like the attempt to blow up Thiers' statue when the channels of written propaganda so urgently needed to be sustained and developed.

Undaunted, however, Ganz reiterated his proposal, indicating also that there should be a military school if the resources were available. Kropotkin, assisted by the delegate for the Jura Federation (Herzig), urged the need for active propaganda particularly in the countryside. He then went on to repeat his old argument about the dangers of pre-

paring a military elite for popular revolution. Insisting that the resolution on chemistry was irrelevant he concluded by pointing out that dynamite involved only one method of struggle, when there were so many others which were being neglected.

For propaganda in the countryside, he recommends the dissemination of tens, hundreds of thousands, if possible, of little leaflets, which explain in a few words the aim of the International and its ideas about the organisation of society which should, in our opinion, arise from the next revolution. Let it be said frankly that we want the land taken away from those who do not cultivate it themselves and put into common ownership at the disposal of the communes. Let us say it once and for all openly and without reticence and rhetorical flourishes, to the peasants – a few words, on a leaflet, and let these leaflets be disseminated to the masses.

As for military studies, he attaches only scant importance to them. What gives armies strength is not the officers, but the spirit which takes hold of each soldier at certain moments. And what is needed for the Revolution is not officers. It is necessary to be able to raise up and carry along the great mass of the people. Without this upraising of the masses, no revolution could be victorious, even if it had the best officers in the world. The officers that the military Academy would provide would be the first to be shot at the time of Revolution. – He believes that the Congress does not need to take a resolution regarding studies of chemistry. When a party needs to have recourse to dynamite, it uses it, without requiring encouragement to do so by Congresses and it makes more propaganda with this method of action than can be made by all our votes. Nevertheless it is only *one* means of struggle, whilst there are so many others which unfortunately are completely neglected at the moment.[9]

Undoubtedly, Kropotkin's interventions must have made quite an impact because they were followed by a demand from Serraux for a closure of the debate, on the grounds that the Congress could only recommend a secret press and propaganda by deed. On Kropotkin's suggestion, however, a committee was appointed to summarise the proposals for methods of action which had been put forward.

The draft declaration which was finally adopted made some accommodation to Kropotkin's position, but it stressed the importance of propaganda by deed and the study of bomb making:

The Congress expresses the wish that the organisations adhering to the International Workingmen's Association should be willing to take account of the following propositions:

It is absolutely necessary to make all possible efforts to propagate by acts the revolutionary idea and the spirit of revolt in that great fraction of the popular mass which still does not take an active part in the movement and has illusions about the morality and efficacy of legal methods.

In abandoning the legal ground on which our action has generally been based until now, to take it on to the ground of illegality, which is the only way leading to

revolution – it is necessary to resort to methods which are in conformity with this aim.

The persecution against which the public revolutionary press struggles in all countries henceforth imposes on us the necessity of organising a clandestine press.

The great mass of workers in the countryside still remains outside the revolutionary-socialist movement; it is absolutely essential for us to direct our efforts this way, remembering that the simplest act, directed against institutions, says more to the masses than thousands of publications and floods of words, and that propaganda by deed is of much greater importance in the countryside than in the towns.

Technical and chemical sciences having already rendered services to the revolutionary cause, and being called on to render it still greater ones in the future, the Congress recommends organisations and individuals taking part in the International Workingmen's Association to give great weight to the study and application of these sciences, as methods of defence and attack.

Although Kropotkin voted with the other delegates to accept the above declaration, he was obviously far from happy with it. Undoubtedly the first part shows a clear influence of Kropotkin's ideas with its insistence on the need for acts of revolt to encourage popular revolt, and the admonition that methods must conform to the aim of popular social revolution. But whilst urging the necessity of promoting the clandestine press, the declaration goes on to insist on the importance of propaganda by deed which clearly tends to detract from the claim Kropotkin had made during the debate, that there was an urgent need for the dissemination of a mass of leaflets in the countryside. Moreover the final recommendation relating to the study of chemistry (even though it includes technology and omits the reference to military sciences) is essentially the same one he had so vigorously attacked during the debate and, in fact, later on at his trial at Lyons in 1883 when the prosecutor accused him of preaching assassination at the London Congress he actually disassociated himself from it:

In the Congress, there were many young people who proposed resolutions directed to the study of chemical methods. I spoke twice against these resolutions.

What I asked for was the instruction of the people in technology, which, for me, was as necessary for them as military instruction.

I said that when a party needs to use dynamite it has to use it, as for example in Russia where the peoople would disappear if they did not utilise the methods put at their disposal by science.[10]

There seems to have been a final clash with the Serraux faction over the question of uncritical support for every revolutionary act.[11] Victorine Rouchy, one of the Paris delegates, proposed that the Congress should require all groups belonging to the IWA to declare their

solidarity for every revolutionary act by no matter what group. In the heated debate which followed, Kropotkin opposed this proposal, obviously recognising its connection with an earlier statement made by the same delegate in close association with Serraux – a statement indicating that the principal role of a secret press would be to back up further acts like that of the attempt to blow up Thiers' statue.[12] Kropotkin argued that the Congress could not impose solidarity by vote, it could only issue a general declaration of revolutionary solidarity as previous congresses had done, and it was up to groups themselves to decide what acts were genuinely revolutionary. Serraux reacted by reiterating Rouchy's insistence that it was everyone's duty to declare solidarity with every revolutionary act. This time, however, Kropotkin's line of argument had more general support, partly because delegates did not like the authoritarian implications of Rouchy's proposal, and partly because they recognised the problems of deciding which acts were revolutionary. The Congress therefore finally agreed on a resolution framed by Malatesta which simply asserted the right of all member groups of the IWA to decide for themselves what secret organisations and acts would be useful for the triumph of the social revolution.

But for all the limited success Kropotkin had achieved in constraining the wilder elements at the Congress, the resolutions that emerged suggested that the anarchist movement was nevertheless now committed to a narrow preoccupation with bomb throwing and propaganda by deed. And he was disturbed by what had happened.

Kropotkin firmly believed that written and oral propaganda had an important part to play in preparing for social revolution. At the same time he was well aware that an act of revolt could inspire people to act in a way theoretical propaganda could not. But for him, action did not simply mean throwing bombs all over the place (particularly when the thrower did not have the skill or resources to do it successfully); it meant every variety of active direct opposition to economic oppression – action, in fact, that might well involve the dissemination of secretly produced leaflets and posters inciting to revolt in direct and simple terms. Actions do indeed speak louder than words, but the action and the word are indissolubly linked when someone risks arrest by posting up an illegal placard. Kropotkin himself was actually expelled from Switzerland at the end of August for his 'illegal' poster denouncing the execution of the narodniks in Russia. As we have seen, Kropotkin in fact disliked the notion of propaganda by deed because it implied that action might be undertaken as a publicity stunt rather than as a genuine

act of revolt against oppression. Proceedings at the London Congress undoubtedly reinforced his anxiety on this point, and indeed he later declared that it was the spectacle of the Serraux faction turning propaganda by deed into a weapon that had led him to define his own ideas in *L'Esprit de Révolte*. '*Moreover I have always been against this word and this idea of propaganda by deed* and it is *against* this idea, which I have always found false, (you do not kill a man to make propaganda – you kill him *because he is a viper and you hate him*), that I wrote the articles *L'Esprit de Révolte* after the London Congress,' he declared in a letter of Herzig of 9 March 1909, adding in a further letter three days later: 'And it was seeing the Serraux gang, at the Congress of London, make a weapon of it, that I wrote *L'Esprit de Révolte*.'[13]

The articles on the spirit of revolt, however, actually appeared *before*, not after the Congress of London. Kropotkin had felt the need to define his position back in May, so it was a more general anxiety about attitudes in the movement which must have inspired him to write *L'Esprit de Révolte*. But he undoubtedly used these articles to provide the basis of his opposition to the obsession with the bomb and propaganda by deed at the Congress, for there were echoes of the *L'Esprit de Révolte* in the Congress resolutions.[14] Unfortunately, this only meant that Kropotkin's concept of the act of revolt became confused with that of propaganda by deed, so as a counterblast to Serraux the articles did not succeed. Particularly when, as Kropotkin himself pointed out, he never disassociated himself from propaganda by deed, because genuine acts of revolt from which he did not wish to disassociate himself were often quite wrongly described as examples:

> No, I have never liked this word. I never protested when it was attributed to me, because this would have been interpreted as *a disavowal of acts accomplished*, and to which had been given (wrongly) the name of *propaganda*, when it was much more profound, infinitely more profound – it came from the most intimate feeling of *revolt* by the individual, of *hatred* directed against a whole régime . . . [15]

The *L'Esprit de Révolte* consisted of four articles which appeared in *Le Révolté* between May and July 1881. It provided a clear and precise exposition of Kropotkin's view of revolutionary tactics – a view which now involved a strong commitment to both collective and individual forms of action linked to a programme of open and clandestine propaganda and orientated primarily towards popular expropriation. And it was a view undoubtedly quite distinct from that of those who now thought in terms of the bomb and propaganda by deed.

Kropotkin introduced the first article with the declaration that in the

life of societies there were periods when the revolution became an imperious necessity.[16] He then went on to describe the developments which would characterise a society on the verge of revolution. New ideas emerged, he claimed, which undermined the old and decaying order yet were frustrated in their development by it. The code of morality on which the organisation of society was based was discredited, and those who longed for a triumph of justice recognised the necessity of sweeping away the old order altogether. The misery which resulted from the economic system produced demands for reform which could be neither suppressed nor satisfied by the state machinery of the old order. Yet such was the gulf between thought and action, how was it that all the complaining was transformed into insurrection? How can *words*, so often spoken in former days, and which got lost in the air like the empty sound of bells, be finally transformed into acts? The answer, he declared, was easy. 'It is *the action*, of minorities, continuous action ceaselessly renewed, which brings about this transformation. Courage, devotion and the spirit of sacrifice, are as contagious as timidity, submission and panic.' And he went on to describe the forms such agitation would take:

> Every different kind, dictated to it by circumstances, means and temperaments. Sometimes lugubrious, sometimes mocking, but always bold; sometimes collective, sometimes purely individual, it does not neglect any means that come to hand, any circumstance of public life, to sustain vigilance, to propagate and define discontent, to excite hatred against the exploiters, ridicule governments, demonstrate their weakness, and above all, and always, to awaken boldness, the spirit of revolt, through preaching by example.

In the second article, Kropotkin began by defining the character of the members of revolutionary minorities:

> Men of courage who, not content with words, seek to put them into effect, characters of integrity, for whom the act is at one with the idea, for whom prison, exile and death are preferable to a life remaining in conflict with their principles, intrepid men who understand that they have to dare to succeed – these are the advanced sentinels who enter the fight, long before the masses are aroused enough to raise up the flag of insurrection openly and march on, weapons in hand, towards the conquest of their rights.

He then went on to explain why the action of these heroic forerunners of revolution was so important:

> But the madmen find sympathy, the masses of the people secretly applaud their boldness and they find imitators. As the first of them go to people jails and prisons,

others come to continue the work; the acts of illegal protest, revolt and vengeance multiply.

Indifference is henceforth impossible. Those who, at the beginning, did not even ask themselves what it was 'the madmen' wanted, are obliged to concern themselves with it, to discuss their ideas, to take sides for or against. Through deeds which force themselves on general attention, the new idea seeps into minds and conquers followers. Each act makes more propaganda in a few days than thousands of pamphlets [brochures].[17]

But it was not just a matter of focussing attention on revolutionary ideas. The most important point about the act of revolt was that it awakened the spirit of revolt and bred daring. The disruption it caused to the governmental machine encouraged the people to recognise the possibility of overthrowing the old order where exasperation only drove people to revolt. 'Hope is born in their hearts,' he declared, adding, 'let us remember that if exasperation is the impetus for riots, it is always hope, the hope of victory, that makes revolutions.' Fierce repression at this stage (the period of ferment) provoked a proliferation of acts of revolt both individual and collective. And the support for the revolutionary party grew. The unity of government collapsed as the ruling classes disputed how to deal with the situation. But neither furious reaction nor concessions could now avert revolution; the former would only increase the violence of the struggle whilst the latter would only stir up the revolutionary spirit more. The people now 'foresee victory, it feels its boldness grow, and those same men who formerly, crushed by misery, were content to sigh in secret, now raise up their heads again and march to the conquest of a better future.'

Basing his argument on the experience of the past, Kropotkin concluded: 'The party which has carried out the most revolutionary agitation, has shown the most life and audacity, will be listened to the most when it comes to action, when it comes to marching forward to carry out the revolution.' The party which, in spite of an energetic propaganda for a well-thought-out programme, had not popularised its message by continually affirming its aspirations in deeds, would have little impact, for when the crowd descended onto the streets they would follow the advice of those they recognised as men of action even though their ideas might be less clear and less broad than those of the theoreticians. It would have little chance of implementing any of its programme:

But the one which has not had the boldness to affirm itself by revolutionary acts in the preparatory period, which has not had enough driving force to inspire in indi-

viduals and groups the sentiment of self denial, the irresistible desire to put its ideas into practice – if this desire had existed it would be translated into acts long before the whole crowd had descended onto the street – the one which has not been able to make its flag popular and its aspirations tangible and comprehensible – that party will only have a slim chance of realising the smallest part of its programme.

In the two final articles Kropotkin examined the revolutionary agitation that preceded the French Revolution to illustrate and reinforce the points he had made in the first two articles. He began by tracing back the two major achievements of the French Revolution – the abolition of royal autocracy and the ending of serfdom – to two inter-related currents of revolutionary action in the pre-revolutionary period – the bourgeois agitation against royalty and the peasant agitation against seigneurial rights.[18] He then proceeded to analyse and discuss the two currents of revolutionary agitation.

Bourgeois agitation, he declared, had identified royalty and the privileged classes as the enemies of the people; it had excited hatred and contempt of those enemies and encouraged the hope of revolution. It had been characterised by the daring propaganda of clandestine pamphlets and leaflets, songs and posters combined with the provocation of street disturbances. He pointed out how these leaflets and pamphlets,[19] instead of expounding theories, simply concentrated on ridiculing the vices of the King and his court, the aristocracy and the clergy. They did not neglect any circumstance in public life to attack the enemy. Such propaganda could not so easily be conducted by the more elaborate enterprise of a newspaper where a whole party might suffer should the publication be suppressed by the authorities; the clandestine leaflet and pamphlet implicated only the anonymous printer and author who were difficult to find. Nevertheless, it was the poster which, in Kropotkin's view, had been the most effective form of propaganda; it represented a particularly swift and persistent form of response to every event of public interest which became more and more menacing as the Revolution approached.

But the agitators resorted, above all, to the poster. The poster was discussed more, it made more agitation than a pamphlet or a brochure. Therefore posters printed or written by hand, appeared on every occasion, as soon as any event took place which interested the mass of the public. Torn down today they would reappear tomorrow, enraging the rulers and their police [sbirros] . . .

If the innumerable posters which were pinned up during the ten or fifteen years that preceded the Revolution, could only be brought together, the immense role this type of agitation played in preparing the uprising could be understood. Jolly and mocking at the beginning, more and more menacing at the approach of the

dénouement, it was always lively, always ready to respond to each event of current politics and the frame of mind of the masses; it excited anger and contempt, it named the true enemies of the people, it awakened amid the peasants, workers and bourgeoisie, hatred of their enemies, it announced the approach of the day of liberation and vengeance.

He was also struck by the particular effectiveness of the destruction of effigies by the mob. That doll was a piece of propaganda itself. And a much more effective propaganda to make the people listen than the abstract which only speaks to a small number of the converted.

This led Kropotkin to discuss the way revolutionaries had encouraged street gatherings – gatherings at first for laughter, then for action, as the people became more and more stirred up by the revolutionary situation and revolutionary propaganda. And he described how street gatherings had gradually developed into acts of revolt, then into riots which in their turn were transformed into revolution:

The essential for preparing the riots that preceded the great revolution, was that the people got used to descending into the street, to expressing their opinions publicly, that they got used to facing the police, troops and cavalry. That is why the revolutionaries of the time did not neglect any means they could use to attract the crowd into the streets, to provoke at first gatherings . . . of people who came to mock, but then of men ready to act, above all if the ferment had been prepared in advance by the situation and deeds of men of action.

Given all that: on the one hand, the revolutionary situation, general discontent and on the other, posters, pamphlets, songs, executions of effigies, all that emboldened the population, and soon, the gatherings became more and more menacing . . . the acts of revolt were infinitely varied, waiting for the day when a spark would be enough to transform this gathering into a riot and the riot into a revolution.[20]

Bourgeois agitation, however, had been directed against the men and institutions of government, not against economic institutions. And had it not been for the agitation among the peasantry against feudal dues, there would have been no really popular and successful struggle against the old order, for without the spontaneous revolutionary action sustained over a period of four years by the French peasantry there would have been only a minor limitation of royal power leaving the feudal régime itself untouched. Peasant agitation which had been carried on in the midst of the people by those who belonged to the people had been particularly effective. It had taken the form of crude posters, easily understood by an almost illiterate population, attacking their immediate oppressors, posters which were circulated amongst the

villages and resulted in the springing up of secret groups to carry out acts of terror against them.

The pamphlet and the flysheet did not percolate into the villages: the peasant at this time could barely read. Very well, it was by the image, printed, often daubed by hand, simple and understandable, that propaganda was made. Some words traced at the side of crudely executed pictures, spread into the villages . . .

There you could find a handmade poster, put up on a tree, which incited to revolt, promising the approach of better times, and recounting the riots which had broken out in provinces at the other end of France.

Under the name of these 'Jacques', secret groups established themselves in the villages, perhaps to set the barn of the seigneur on fire, perhaps to destroy his harvests or his game, maybe even to execute him; and how many times did they not find in the castle a body pierced with a knife which bore this inscription: *By the hand of Jacques*?[21]

Kropotkin concluded that the revolution of 1788–93, as an example of the large-scale disorganisation of the state by popular (i.e. primarily economic) revolution, offered valuable lessons to revolutionists. It had shown, how, in a revolutionary situation, revolutionaries had needed to develop the spirit of revolt before an insurrection could take place. It had revealed the effectiveness of peasant agitation in inspiring the people to carry through a popular revolution to destroy the old order. Bourgeois agitation which had been directed narrowly against the government had ended up with the bourgeoisie cooperating with royalty in efforts to curb popular revolt by a minor diminution of royal power. But the agitation among the peasants had prepared the essentially popular action against the economic oppressors which had kept the revolution going, until absolutism had been finally overthrown. And the next revolution would have to develop along these lines if it was going to be a true popular revolution which would completely transform the property system:

Whilst the revolutionaries of the bourgeoisie directed their attacks against the government, the popular revolutionaries – history has not even preserved their names for us – the men of the people prepared *their* uprising, *their* revolution, by acts of revolt directed against the seigneurs, the tax collectors and the exploiters of every sort.

In 1788, when the approach of the revolution was announced by serious riots among the mass of the people, the monarchy and bourgeoisie sought to curb it by a few concessions . . . a political riot can be appeased in this way, but with so little a popular revolt cannot be overcome. And the wave was mounting all the time. But in attacking property it *disorganised the State* at the same time. It made all government absolutely impossible, and the revolt of the people directed against the

> nobility and the wealthy in general, ended, as we know, four years later by sweeping away monarchy and absolutism.
>
> This of course is the course of all great revolutions, if it is – as we are convinced it must be – not a simple change of government, but a true popular revolution, a cataclysm which will transform the régime of property from top to bottom.

Kropotkin himself obviously attached considerable significance to *L'Esprit de Révolte* for he published it as a pamphlet in Geneva in October 1881. And undoubtedly it was a serious and important attempt to analyse the revolutionary process and to identify the role that anarchists needed to play to influence that process. There is little indication of this of course in the parts of the articles which surfaced in the London Congress declaration; indeed, the latter, as has already been suggested, almost certainly gave a distorted impression of Kropotkin's view at this stage. The point is well illustrated by the paragraph of the Congress declaration dealing with the question of agitation in the countryside, where it is asserted that a simple act directed against existing institutions could convey more to the masses than floods of oral and printed propaganda, and that propaganda by deed was even more important in the countryside than in the towns.[22] This is very close to Kropotkin's assertion that an act of revolt could achieve more for propaganda in a few days than thousands of brochures, but unlike the Congress declaration, Kropotkin's statement in *L'Esprit de Révolte* was not linked to an insistence on the primary importance of propaganda by deed, and it was not intended as a criticism of all written propaganda. Kropotkin, in fact, had urged the need for an increase in printed propaganda, but propaganda expressed in simple direct terms which were meaningful to people with little or no education. And, preoccupied though he was with the importance of action, he did not share the Congress's derisive view of oral and written propaganda – he had simply pointed out that the masses did not pay much attention to ideas that were not also expressed practically through action.

The principal theme of *L'Esprit de Révolte* was undoubtedly the vital importance of a strong and close relationship between theory and action, a theme barely touched on in the London Congress declaration except perhaps for the somewhat vague reference to anarchist morality. It was a theme which had appeared in the earlier document *L'Idée anarchiste au point de vue de la réalisation pratique*,[23] but this time it had been explored in much greater depth and with particular reference to the experience of the French Revolution. With graphic

eloquence, Kropotkin had argued that there was an abyss separating thought from action in human society, which had to be bridged when a revolutionary situation was finally transformed into revolution, and that this could only be done when the popular will to revolt had been fired by heroic minorities whose commitment had inspired them to act ahead of everyone else in the face of daunting odds. And he had pointed out that it was these minorities who, once having stamped their character on the preparatory agitation, were able to influence the course of the revolution itself. In the current situation, according to Kropotkin, this meant that unless anarchists similarly involved themselves in heroic preparatory action and were able to help inspire a proliferation of acts of revolt during the period of ferment that followed, they would not be able to influence the course of the next revolution. He had been at pains to point out the breadth and variety of the collective and individual action of revolutionary minorities, thereby underlining his anxiety about the need for a much broader and systematic policy of action against oppression than that implied in a narrow preoccupation with dynamite. At the same time he had been particularly insistent that all such action should nevertheless be directly related to the revolutionary theory of those who carried it out; for Kropotkin, the idea had to be at one with the deed.[24] He had therefore maintained that if anarchists were committed to the transformation of society by popular expropriation they had to adopt methods appropriate to this aim, they had to take and encourage direct action against economic oppression. Purely political action, i.e. attacks on government, would not produce a sustained popular attack on the economic system but only a limited demand for a change of government as the bourgeois agitation had done in the French Revolution, and this would mean the loss of revolutionary momentum before any real transformation of society had been achieved. Kropotkin had, in effect, used the experience of the French Revolution to underline his general point about the close relationship between theory and action, and to show that revolutionary action, which was primarily political, could not secure any fundamental change in society such as was envisaged by anarchists. More specifically, he had clearly invoked the experience of the French Revolution to demonstrate that economic terrorism was more effective than political terrorism. In doing this, he had distanced himself from the approach of the Italians, like Malatesta who were anxious to attack the state and all those connected with it, as well as from the indiscriminate destructivism of Serraux and *La Révolution Sociale*. Yet whilst he

doubted the revolutionary morality of Serraux, he had no such doubts about that of Malatesta or even Cafiero and this prevented him from openly attacking them for their preoccupation with political terrorism just as it had done in the case of the narodniks.[25] For Kropotkin, the genuineness of the moral idealism which inspired the revolutionary deed was all important, and in fact the whole of *L'Esprit de Révolte*, like *Aux Jeunes Gens* (The Appeal to the Young) is infused with that passionate moral idealism he had inherited from the chaikovskists. So for all his insistence that anarchist theory had to be expressed in special sorts of action, it was, and would remain difficult for him to wean the anarchist movement from political or even indiscriminate terrorism.

L'Esprit de Révolte proved to be one of the most popular of his pamphlets, second only to *Aux Jeunes Gens* in French-speaking circles. It went into a second edition as early as September 1882 and was published in the form of a series of articles in two anarchist newspapers in the Lyon area in the summer of that year.[26] How far this meant that readers were influenced by Kropotkin's approach is uncertain. As has already been pointed out, the phrasing of the London Congress Declaration had tended to obscure the true nature of Kropotkin's position. And this was certainly an important factor as regards the anarchist groups in Paris where Serraux and *La Révolution Sociale* had been so active.[27] On the other hand Kropotkin's influence on the developing movement in the Lyon area had already been established prior to the London Congress, so that the appearance of *L'Esprit de Révolte* in anarchist newspapers there may well indicate a strong sympathy for the particular approach it represented.[28]

The problem for Kropotkin, however, was not just a question of persuading his comrades to undertake a broader programme of action more appropriate to their aims and ideals; it was also and perhaps more urgently, a question of encouraging them actually to embark upon a programme of action to counteract the parliamentary tactics of the social democrats and their sympathisers who like Costa, Brousse and even by now Schwitzguébel, had lost confidence in the anarchist approach.[29]

He was, of course, as always very much concerned at the situation in Geneva and the Jura Federation. Some effort had been made to propagandise the peasants, but his discussion with Malatesta suggests that in spite of the success of *Le Révolté* he felt very few, even in the Genevan groups, were prepared to initiate some sort of clandestine activity and that in general there was little effort to exploit opportunities for

developing working-class militancy in the unions. At the same time he was particularly distressed by Schwitzguébel's abandonment of an active role in the movement after suggesting some sort of compromise with parliamentary methods at the Congress of the Jura Federation in 1880. It is not therefore, surprising that he followed *L'Esprit de Révolte* with articles to both stiffen the resolve of anarchists against parliamentarism and boost their confidence that they could play an important role in the revolutionary process as a minority group.

The first of these articles 'Tous Socialistes' appeared in September.[30] It was a biting denunciation of the way socialists had allowed their ideas to be watered down and undermined by involvement in the electoral process and parliamentarism. He warned how the enemies of socialism were conspiring to destroy the movement by recuperating the socialist ideal of social justice. 'Formerly they would give you the cold shoulder. Today they seek to make you believe they share your ideas, so as to slit your throat more easily the moment they have the chance.' Socialists had been duped into opting for ameliorations instead of revolutionary change, and he accused them of undermining their cause by opening up the party to bourgeois adventurers who did not care about principles, and to bourgeois mischief-makers out to corrupt them. Kropotkin denounced parliamentary socialists as a new brand of socialists who were not really socialists at all.

> Now a new species of so-called socialists has been formed which retains only the name of the old party . . .
>
> 'Let us prepare,' they say, 'the ground, not to expropriate the land but to take over the governmental machine, as the means by which we shall ameliorate the lot of the workers later, little by little. Let us prepare the next revolution, not the conquest of factories, but the conquest of municipalities!
>
> As if the bourgeoisie, remaining in control of capital, could let them make experiments of socialism even when they succeeded in taking power! As if the conquest of the municipalities was possible without the conquest of factories.

'Tous Socialistes' was followed by an article in the next issue to infuse anarchists with a firm confidence in their position. 'L'Ordre' was a defiant and eloquent defence of the movement's commitment to the terms 'anarchy' and 'anarchist', in which Kropotkin boldly affirmed that whilst anarchy did imply the negation of order it was a negation of order in the sense that the present order was evil and had to be overthrown by a popular revolution.[31] Kropotkin followed this up in November with an article to reassure anarchists about their vital role in the revolutionary process in the face of criticism from friends as well as

enemies, who argued that anarchist communists in fighting for their ideal had undertaken a task totally beyond the resources of a minority movement such as theirs, which was lost in the midst of 'a mass of people who were indifferent' and opposed by a terrible and powerful enemy.[32] He conceded that anarchist groups were only a minority and might well be only a minority as an organisation until the day of the revolution. The important point, however, was that anarchist communism actually reflected the direction of the contemporary evolution of the human spirit particularly among the Latin races. This explained the people's sympathetic response to anarchist communism, both in the towns and villages, once it has been clearly explained to them in simple language supported by practical illustrations.

The ideas of anarchy and communism sprang directly from the very heart of the people itself:

> If anarchy and communism had been the product of philosophic speculations, practised in the warmth of their offices, by scholars, certainly these two principles would find no echo. But these two ideas were born in the very heart of the people. They are the statement of what the worker and peasant think and say, when, departing one day or another from the daily routine, they begin to dream of a better future. They are the statement of the slow evolution which is produced in people's minds in the course of this century. They are the popular conception of the transformation which has to happen soon to bring justice, solidarity and fraternity into our towns and countryside. Born of the people, they are acclaimed by the people each time they are expounded in a comprehensible manner.

This, rather than its size, was the true force of the anarchist communist movement. History had shown that those who had been a minority on the eve of the revolution became the predominant force of the revolution if they represented a true expression of popular aspirations – provided the revolution lasted long enough to allow anarchist ideas to develop among the masses and to bear fruit. And, expanding on his previous arguments about the rapid dissemination of ideas during the revolution itself, he described how the anarchist idea propagandised by contemporary anarchist groups would similarly spread and develop among the masses during the period of ferment.

> Very well, it is, above all, during the period of excitement, when the mind works at an increased speed, when everyone, in the sumptuous town as in the darkest hut is interested in public affairs, discusses, speaks and seeks to convert the others, that the anarchist idea, sown from today by existing groups, will germinate, bear fruit and become clearer in the minds of the masses. It is then that the indifferent of today will become the convinced supporters of the new idea.

The prolongation of the revolutionary process to enable all this to happen would be secured by the widespread action of minority groups to trigger off revolts in a thousand places at once with the tacit and then open support of the masses.

> The same will be true of the revolution whose approach we foresee. The idea of anarchist communism, represented today by small minorities, but becoming more and more clear in the popular mind, will make its way amongst the great mass. Groups spread everywhere, small though they may be, yet strong in the support that they will find amongst the people, will raise up the red flag of insurrection. The latter breaking out, at the same time at a thousand spots throughout the land, will prevent the establishment of any sort of government which could hinder developments, and the revolution will rage until it has accomplished its mission: the abolition of individual property and the State.
>
> That day, what is now a minority will be the People, the great mass, and this mass risen up against property and the State will march to anarchist communism.

This article was basically a reiteration of the points Kropotkin had made about revolutionary minorities in *L'Esprit de Révolte* and *Aux Jeunes Gens*. But this time he had expanded his arguments relating them very particularly to the anarchists and contemporary agitation – almost certainly in response to the criticism of other socialists like Brousse. On 19 November Brousse's famous article 'Encore L'Union Socialiste' had appeared in *Le Prolétaire* in which he had rejected what seemed to him the isolating 'all or nothing' approach of revolutionary socialists and had called for 'the policy of possibilities' to unite all socialists in effective action.

> The flag of a single school can only unite a few of the resolute, and this is not enough if we want to prepare something other than one of those bloody slaughters which have weakened us for ten years.
>
> To be sure I am one of those who wants to be communist, anti-governmental and revolutionary, but above all I am one of those who wants to be so in earnest. I prefer to give up the 'all at the same time' practised up till now which has generally led to the 'nothing at all', to split up the ideal aim into several stages, to make some of our demands in some sense more immediate ones so as to make them possible at last instead of tiring myself running on the spot, or as in the story of Bluebeard, remaining stranded on the towers of Utopia and never seeing anything happen which is concrete and tangible.[33]

The connection between this and Kropotkin's refutation of the argument about the ineffectiveness of revolutionary minorities is clear enough. And there can be little doubt that in this exchange the anarchists did quite well for by now Kropotkin was more than a match for Brousse as a propagandist.

Kropotkin's anxieties about the lack of a policy of systematic revolutionary action in the Jura Federation, however, continued; indeed, they may well have been intensified during the year that followed.

In November, a few months after his expulsion from Switzerland, Kropotkin and his wife settled in England. He found the situation there very depressing:

> The year that I then passed in London was a year of real exile. For one who held advanced socialist opinions, there was no atmosphere to breathe in. There was no sign of that animated socialist movement which I found so largely developed on my return in 1886.[34]

His comrade of the chaikovskist days was then in London, and together they began socialist propaganda among the workers with the help of a few English workers Kropotkin had got to know during the Congress, or who had been attracted to socialism by the prosecutions of Most. But the response was discouraging:

> We had ridiculously small audiences, seldom consisting of more than a dozen men. Occasionally some grey-bearded Chartist would rise from the audience and tell us that all we were saying had been said forty years before, and was greeted then with enthusiasm by the crowds of workers, but that now all was dead, and there was no hope of reviving it.[35]

In his somewhat isolated and depressing situation in London, Kropotkin became more and more exasperated and disheartened by the lack of any real vitality or dynamism in the Jura Federation. And in June 1882 he sent a long letter to the annual congress at Lausanne which, whilst praising the Federation for the role it had played in the development of anarchist communism, criticised it severely for its inaction.[36]

He seems to have felt that the Jurassians had been demoralised by the parliamentary socialists into feeling that they were ineffective because their movement was small, and that they would only secure an increased membership if they modified their principles as other socialists were doing. Kropotkin therefore pointed out that such compromises would not secure a single extra adherent to the movement – the real problem was the lack of action and, indeed, he expressed his surprise that anarchy had as many supporters as it did when the Federation did so little. Such support, in fact, was the strongest proof possible that anarchy represented the real popular tendency which would manifest itself as the true force of the next revolution – for people were being drawn to anarchism when almost

nothing was being done to attract them.[37] Insisting on the need for such frank self-criticism within the Federation, he went on to compare the inaction of the majority of section members with the intense activity of the section leaders in the *partis ouvriers*:

> Each of them writes 15 to 20 letters a day, contributes to two or three papers, publishes works, travels a lot, sees crowds of people . . . Take this activity and compare it to ours. Being always sure of one or two friends who really do the work and on whom we rely to do every task, what do the other members of the sections do? – Almost nothing . . . Let us not bandy compliments. Let us leave that to the bourgeois and be able to tell each other the truth about ourselves face to face. The best, the only way of doing better, is to start to tell ourselves the truth through self-criticism.
>
> We do very little, we almost set up inaction as a principle of our life.

Abstention did not mean inaction. If anarchists refused to waste energy on the electoral comedy it had to be so that they could better apply their efforts to a more useful form of agitation, which no one else would do if they did not do it. Anarchists were condemned to inaction, not as the social democrats claimed by their principles, but by their own indolence.[38] In conclusion, he referred to recent discussions with Malatesta about the importance of holding firm to anarchist principles at this time:

> The Jura Federation should not change anything in its programme. On the contrary, it must maintain it in its absolute purity, without changing a letter. The general interest of the socialist party ordains it. Recently we discussed the question at length again with our friend Malatesta with regard to Italy and we reached agreement on maintaining more than ever that it is necessary to stand fast. We have got through the worst period of calm: we are marching towards the débâcle and you do not change your flag on the eve of battle.[39]

It was essential for the Federation to embark instead on a programme of immediate practical agitation. 'But what we have to abandon is our lassitude. History forces us, orders us, on pain of being crushed and making a revolution for the King of Prussia, to deploy at once all our forces and to introduce into our immediate programme of action – which has only been a programme of theoretical propaganda – *agitation on the economic ground* . . . ' He was convinced that the young people of the Vallon were capable of undertaking such agitation – agitation which would enable the Swiss internationalists to take their place in the avant-garde of the socialist party. What precisely Kropotkin suggested about economic agitation at this point has apparently been omitted from the published text.[40] All we have is the

following general statement: 'What we need is spontaneous action, originating from workers' protest, arising from the situation itself and in which we, the organised element, must be only the expression of feelings which animate the working masses from whom, let us note in passing, we have isolated ourselves too much in our daily contacts.'

It is difficult to know exactly what effect Kropotkin's letter had on the Congress. It was read out towards the end of the proceedings after a rather desultory discussion of the methods of agitation during which no one, except perhaps Werner, expressed any very convincing ideas about what to do apart from producing special brochures for the peasants. Undoubtedly, therefore, the letter must have caused a stir, and indeed the resolution at the end of the session went some way towards responding to the urgency of Kropotkin's call for action. 'The Congress recognising the urgency of all means of action, the spoken and the written word, deeds, commends to the zeal of all companions an unceasing propaganda, above all amongst our brothers, the peasants.'[41] But this was a rather general statement with no reference to Kropotkin's proposal about economic agitation. It looks as if very little serious consideration was actually given to it for, ostensibly, because of the lateness of the hour, the session closed with no further debate after the reading of Kropotkin's letter. This meant that neither Kropotkin nor Werner's proposals were actually discussed. Werner had indicated at the outset that other delegates were hostile to his idea of action in the commune because they feared quite wrongly that agitation during elections meant becoming compromised with parliamentarism.[42] Yet at the same time for all their suspicion of Werner's proposals they were possibly too fearful and even demoralised to commit themselves specifically to the sort of violent direct action envisaged in Kropotkin's letter. So they avoided any further discussion and voted for a resolution which seemed very revolutionary without making any very specific commitment to any particular proposal. This is all the more likely in view of the fact that Kropotkin had clearly been so anxious about the timidity of the practical approach of the Jurassians that he had actually felt constrained to warn them firmly against any compromise of their principles.

But if the situation in the Swiss Jura was depressing, the development of an anarchist Federation in the Lyon area now encouraged Kropotkin's hopes for the movement in France. On his way to England in the autumn of 1881, he had addressed meetings in Lyon, St Etienne and Vienne, and had been very encouraged by the workers' response to

his speeches.[43] Although rather out of touch with the movement in France during the months he spent in London, he had been aware of the ferment in the Lyon area and in his letter to the Jura Federation had declared: 'What remains theory in Switzerland becomes practice in France.' In fact Kropotkin seems to have thought the Lyon movement was a very substantial one and that it owed a great deal to the inspiration of the Jura Federation. 'If we speak today of anarchy, if there are 3,000 anarchists in Lyon and 5,000 in the bassin [du Rhône], if there are a few thousand in the South, the Jura Federation is the cause of a good part of it.'[44]

Undoubtedly the development of the movement in South Eastern France owed something to the inspiration from the neighbouring Jura Federation. Certainly, there were close personal contacts between anarchists in the Jura and those in the Midi. Dejoux, the editor of *Le Droit Social* of Lyons, attended the Congress of Lausanne.[45] It is significant however, that his contributions to the discussions were more lively and positive than those of most of the other delegates. Whatever influence the Jura Federation may have had on the Fédération de l'Est, the success of the latter was primarily due to the dynamic character of the French agitators and to the responsiveness of the local working classes bowed down by a savage economic crisis, and bitterly resentful of the callous and oppressive attitude of the political and religious establishment of the area.[46]

But, encouraged though Kropotkin may have been by the development of the anarchist movement in the Lyon area, he remained very anxious about the threat of parliamentarism, and much of what he wrote during 1882 was directed against it.[47] He was particularly concerned about the increasing influence of Brousse and the possibilists, and in an article as late as March 1882 he had reiterated his warning that anarchists must resist the broussist plea for unity of action, because anarchist aims dictated different forms of agitation from those of other socialists – forms of agitation which he still seems to have felt had not been developed in the anarchist movement, even in South Eastern France.

Kropotkin argued that socialists who wanted to leave all discussion of theory on one side, so as to concentrate on united action to prepare for revolution, were actually dishonest. 'Basically, the words "Let us not discuss these theoretical questions" come down to this: – Do not discuss *our* theory, but help us to put it into effect.'[48] In his view, the mode of action of each and everyone was inspired consciously or sub-

consciously by their different ideas of the future. And, in fact, in order to be able to influence the course of revolutionary change it was essential to have a clearly defined aim which had been popularised by word and action before the outbreak of the revolution, for on that day there would no longer be time for discussion, it would be necessary to act. He insisted that the task of familiarising the masses with this aim was a much more necessary and immense one than generally imagined because of the way the people were worked on by the press. Present and future modes of anarchist action depended on the aim, and in fact the difference between the socialist groups manifested itself not only on the day of revolution but also, in the present, in their daily life and agitation. This meant that the anarchist communist, the statist communist and the possibilist found themselves in disagreement on all points concerning their immediate action. The difference of aim could not be ignored, indeed they should be frankly discussed and expounded so that the masses could elaborate a common ideal to which, one day, the majority could rally. He did concede that there were common fields of action, namely the struggle against capital and its upholder, the government, and so 'every struggle which prepares for this expropriation has to be supported unanimously by all the socialist groups whatever shade of opinion they belong to.' He insisted, nevertheless, on the necessity of unity between thought and action in anarchist agitation to popularise the anarchist ideal to ensure its triumph in the revolution. 'But let us remember; if a more or less general idea is to surge up from the masses on the day of conflagration, we must not neglect continually to expound our ideal of the society which must arise from the revolution . . . Theory and practice have to be at one with each other, if we are to succeed.'

This attack on the possibilist call for cooperation between socialist groups was an astute one, for it had pinpointed the element of dishonesty in Brousse's position, whilst avoiding a counter-charge of sectarianism, by insisting on the need for all to support the workers' economic struggle, i.e. strikes, particularly violent strikes for which parliamentary socialists had little enthusiasm.

But of course it was not just the success of the possibilists that worried Kropotkin; he was just as concerned about what seemed to be the lack of development of a specifically anarchist form of agitation. This latter anxiety however, probably sprang less out of an accurate assessment of the situation, than out of his feeling of isolation from the mainstream of the anarchist movement in a country where there were

few signs of any awakening of a revolutionary spirit among the oppressed classes. In the end he found the situation in London so unendurable that he took the risk of returning to France.

> We were sure that in France I should soon be arrested; but we often said to each other, 'Better a French prison than this grave'.[49]

8

The trial of Lyon 1883 and response to persecution

The spring and summer of 1882 were marked by dramatic developments in France which created great excitement in the Lyonnais movement. And it was this that finally persuaded Kropotkin to return. In February, the Lyon anarchists had launched a newspaper, *Le Droit Social*, which, under various names in the next few years, was to provide a lively and provocative focal point for the small but remarkably resilient movement of the region.[1]

On 23 March a strike at Roanne of 4,000 weavers involving a lockout had ended with some workers not being taken back on. The next day a young unemployed worker called Fournier shot at Bréchard, the employer believed to be the instigator of the crisis. The anarchists of the Lyon region reacted enthusiastically to this *attentat* with Dejoux, the editor of the *Droit Social*, organising a subscription to buy a 'revolver d'honneur' for its perpetrator. Meanwhile at the end of February, Emile Florian, a young cotton worker from Reims who in October 1881 had shot at the first bourgeois he saw after failing to get near enough to Gambetta to kill him, had been sentenced to twenty years hard labour, and the anarchists in Paris had organised two meetings and made collections on his behalf. Anarchists in the Lyon region were quick to follow the example of their Parisian comrades and they organised meetings at Reims and Roanne which acclaimed both Florian and Fournier as '*Présidents d'honneur*'. Jean Grave, commenting on Fournier's deed in the *Droit Social*, declared, 'a Revolution, prepared by a series of acts of this sort, could not be anything but social, for the first concern of the worker would be to take over the workshops, and once accustomed to act for themselves in this way they would send packing any government that tried to impose itself the day after the revolution'.[2] *Le Révolté* expressed full agreement with this statement, adding, 'a revolution, preceded only by acts against the agents of

government, will inevitably only be an insurrection *to change* the government; it will not even be a Revolution.'[3]

Here at last was an example of economic terrorism and a departure from the preoccupation with the political *attentat* which Kropotkin and his friends had been looking for. Moreover, here was an act for which the anarchists had been able to organise expressions of popular sympathy and support. And, intent upon proclaiming that there was now an awakening of the spirit of revolt which was expressing itself in energetic actions, they were glad to link Fournier's act with that of Florian (even though they had manifested little interest in Florian until now, presumably partly because his primary intention had been to attack a major political figure and partly because the actual attack had been a fairly indiscriminate one on a member of the bourgeoisie.) With a contemptuous denunciation for the way socialists '*à l'eau de rose*' had failed to show solidarity with the *attentat*, they insisted that the masses were less timorous than their leaders, and that there were perhaps hundreds like Fournier in their midst not organised in any party who would one day become the revolutionary torrent which would engulf the old order.[4] Kropotkin clearly did not write this piece, for it was a report on the social movement in France which could not have been written from England. Moreover, it ended with a concluding paragraph about propaganda by deed which could not have come from his pen: 'This is where acts are mixed with threats, where propaganda by deed, the most fruitful and the most popular sort, is joined together with theoretical propaganda through the spoken and written word.' Nevertheless, there can be little doubt but that he would have been in substantial agreement with the basic sentiments contained in the report. Indeed, it could be argued that the phrase *propaganda by deed* had been 'kropotkinised' in this context, for it had actually been used to stress the intimate relationship between theory and action and the need to express the anarchist ideal in deeds as well as words. His June letter to the Jura Federation expressed a lively enthusiasm for the movement in South Eastern France – an enthusiasm which soon made it impossible for him to stay away any longer.

When Kropotkin arrived in France at the end of October, he found that a particularly strong and active group had developed in Lyon with anarchists being successful not only in disrupting the meetings of 'opportunist politicians' but also in getting radical resolutions passed, much to the consternation of the local bourgeoisie. The agitation of the anarchists in the city had begun to take on a more violent character

against a background of increasing misery and discontent among the workers. According to Grave, the movement in Lyon 'exceeded that in Paris in activity and violence of tone. The comrades down there had been publishing *Le Droit Social.* The tone of this immediately became very violent, and prosecutions fell thick as hail'.[5]

Kropotkin had always been careful to avoid this sort of situation with *Le Révolté*, and he had in fact underlined the danger of a newspaper adopting a very explicitly violent approach in *L'Esprit de Révolte*. Nevertheless, although the language and thought of the *Droit Social* were uncompromisingly violent, they did show a preoccupation with revolt through strikes and attacks on employers, which was much closer to Kropotkin's idea of what anarchist agitation should be than that of the London Congress. He certainly, therefore, expressed support for the Lyon paper. But he did not actually write for it, in spite of the fact that his first article on the spirit of revolt had been republished in its pages during the summer of 1882.[6] Neither probably did he write for its successor, *L'Etendard Révolutionnaire*, even though that too began publication of *L'Esprit de Révolte* before being suppressed in October 1882. This could have been simply because his work for *Le Révolté* left him no time to do so. It may even have been because he feared the police would easily obtain evidence to enable them to arrest him as soon as he returned to France, if he had sent articles to Lyon. But it surely must also have had something to do with his misgivings about putting out such explicitly violent propaganda in a movement's newspaper. In this connection it is perhaps significant that Kropotkin evidently failed to interest the Lyon anarchists in a reconstitution of the International in France because it was not revolutionary enough for them, a point he established at his trial in 1883.

The accusation was ridiculous, as everyone knew that none of the Lyon workers had ever joined the International, and it entirely fell through, as may be seen from the following episode. The only witness for the prosecution was the chief of the secret police at Lyon, an elderly man, who was treated with the utmost respect. His report I must say, was quite correct as concerns the facts . . . Seeing that so far he had been fair in his testimony, I ventured to ask him a question: 'Did you ever hear the International Workingmen's Association spoken of at Lyon?'

'Never,' he replied sulkily.

'When I returned from the London Congress of 1881, and did all I could to have the International reconstituted in France, did I succeed?'

'No. They did not find it revolutionary enough!'[7]

Meanwhile, just before Kropotkin's return to Thonon, there had begun a series of dramatic events which was to culminate in the trial of

sixty-six anarchists in January of the following year. In August a number of *attentats* had been carried out by members of a secret society known as La Bande Noire in the mining area around Montceau-les-Mines and Le Creusot. In spite of his somewhat isolated position in England, Kropotkin knew something about these events and the anarchist response to them, but he discovered the details and registered the full impact of what had happened at Montceau only after his return to France, when he read reports of the trial of those accused of taking part in the *attentats*, at the end of October.

I knew there was a great deal of ferment, but during the eleven months I had stayed in London I had lost close contact with the French movement. A few weeks after I returned to Thonon I learned from the papers that the miners of Montceau-les-Mines, incensed at the vexations of the ultra-Catholic owners of the mines, had begun a sort of movement; they were holding secret meetings, talking of a general strike; the stone crosses erected on all the roads round the mines were thrown down or blown up by dynamite cartridges, which are largely used by the miners in underground work, and often remain in their possession.[8]

The prosecution at the trial, as well as trying rather unsuccessfully to implicate the Parti Ouvrier in the activities of the Bande Noire, also claimed that the accused belonged to the 'pestiferous centre at Geneva' on the flimsy evidence of the discovery of one copy of *L'Etendard Révolutionnaire* at Montceau. In fact, there does not seem to have been any direct link between the anarchists and the Bande Noire. However the character and activity of the letter may well have taken some of its inspiration from the anarchists of the Lyon area – which, after all, was not so very far away. The comrades at Lyon, for their part, indeed had not hesitated to identify with the accused. *L'Etendard Révolutionnaire* described the Bande Noire as 'that admirable anarchist movement which makes the Chagots tremble', and sent one of its contributors to Montceau.[9] A meeting addressed by Bordat was organised at Lyon which ended by voting for an address of congratulation to the miners of Montceau. On 2 September, *Le Révolté* carried an enthusiastic report of the events at Montceau-les-Mines:

There are men there who, spontaneously, without leaders, without commands, without instructions, independently of any political preoccupation, purely because they have had enough of their oppression and misery, have raised the standard of rebellion against the exploiters and their accomplices . . . There, in spite of their wretched failure and the possibility of being stopped on the way, they show us in brief, what the next revolution will be, when the hour of the great Jacquerie strikes! This first anarchist insurrection truly provides an admirable example.[10]

Again, although this report was not written by Kropotkin there can be little doubt but that he would have agreed with it for the pattern of activity of the Bande Noire was very evocative of the sort of pre-revolutionary action he had described in *L'Esprit de Révolte*. And, in fact, at the end of October – the time after his return to France when, according to his own account, he first became fully aware of all that had been going on – he seems to have written a leader article in *Le Révolté* pointing out the revolutionary significance of recent events.[11]

The article, 'Les Préludes de la Révolution', maintained that recent developments in France, the isolated acts of Florian and Fournier and the partial riots like those at Montceau and Blanzy, indicated that the period of revolts which preceded all popular revolutions had begun. But the recent disturbances had been different from the jacqueries of the past for the people had taken direct action for themselves against their oppressors instead of relying on politicians and changes of government. The period of simply attacking crowned heads was over – the workers were now attacking their real enemies, the economic oppressors. And the action of the Blanzy miners had made such a great impact on the popular mind that it was inevitable that similar revolts would follow in countries elsewhere. Whatever the sacrifices the revolts cost they would determine the character of a future revolution. It was now certain that the people would fight for a real social revolution – a revolution that this time would not fail.[12]

But it was not just the events at Montceau that caused excitement in anarchist circles. A few days after the trial of the recalcitrant miners had begun, the tense situation in the Lyon area finally resulted in acts of violence being committed in the city itself. On the night of 22 October a bomb exploded in the Théâtre Bellecour, a favourite haunt of the bourgeoisie, killing a young worker who tried to put out the fuse, and causing extensive damage. The following day a second bomb went off outside a local recruiting office, but this time no one was injured and there was only minor damage.

The feeling of the workers was growing every day . . . As is usual at such times, the fury of the poorer people turned especially against the places of amusement and debauch, which become only the more conspicuous in times of desolation and misery, as they impersonate for the worker the egotism and dissoluteness of the wealthier classes. A place particularly hated by the workers was the underground café at the Théâtre Bellecour which remained open all night, and where, in the small hours of the morning, one could see newspaper men and politicians feasting and drinking in company with gay women. Not a meeting was held but some menacing allusion was made to that café, and one night a dynamite cartridge was

> exploded in it by an unknown hand. A worker who was occasionally there, a socialist, jumped to blow out the lighted fuse of the cartridge, and was killed, while a few of the feasting politicians were slightly wounded. Next day a dynamite cartridge was exploded at the doors of a recruiting bureau, and it was said that the anarchists intended to blow up the huge statue of the Virgin which stands on one of the hills of Lyon.[13]

In this account, Kropotkin makes it quite clear that he thought that the bomb attacks at Lyon were committed not by anarchists but by unknown individuals among the poor expressing popular anger against a notorious place of bourgeois debauchery, even claiming that it was a socialist worker who had died trying to put out the fuse at Bellecour. The authorities and the bourgeois press of the time, however, expressed an entirely different view. They claimed that the anarchists were clearly responsible for the *attentats* because they had advocated the attack on the Théâtre Bellecour (popularly known as l'Assommoir). Kropotkin, of course, points out that menacing allusions to the latter by the workers were a common occurrence at meetings. But the fact is that anarchist propaganda had been closely associated with such threats, indeed just hours before the explosion at the Assommoir an anarchist propagandist called Desgranges, speaking ing at a meeting at Villefranche, had apparently declared that it was time to finish off the bourgeoisie and that to find them you had only to go to the Théâtre Bellecour.[14] A few months earlier a similar reference had been made to the theatre in the *Droit Social*: 'You can see there particularly after midnight, the fine flower of the bourgeoisie and of trade . . . The first act of the social Revolution will have to be to destroy these dens.'[15] The authorship of the article was attributed to Cyvoct, the editor of *L'Etendard Révolutionnaire*, and in December, after having been extradited from Belgium, he was tried and convicted of the theatre bomb outrage with the article being a key factor in securing his conviction. Cyvoct was not responsible for the offending article and may well have been totally innocent of the charge against him. But according to Grave the anarchists certainly knew about the plan to attack the Assommoir although they tried to prevent it. At least, this is what Dejoux told Grave.[16] They themselves tried to make bombs. Cyvoct was arrested in Belgium because his companion Paul Métayer blew himself up by accident. They did actually plan to carry out a bomb attack on the statue of the Virgin overlooking Lyon.[17] There can be little doubt, therefore, that at the very least anarchist propaganda had something to do with the *attentats*. Possibly Kropotkin would not have

denied this, but his account does attempt to present the bomb attacks in Lyon primarily as a spontaneous outburst of popular anger rather than as part of a conscious movement to fight oppression, and in doing so it reveals his continuing anxiety about acts of fairly indiscriminate violence – such action might constitute an inevitable part of the resistance to oppression but it was not a desirable form of agitation. Obviously Kropotkin was writing all this many years later at a time after the outrages of the 1890s when he had become much more aware of the limitations of such forms of action. Nevertheless, the fact that *Le Révolté* does not seem to have celebrated the bomb attacks at Lyon as it had done the action of the Blanzy miners does suggest that the account in his *Memoirs* does provide a fairly accurate reflection of Kropotkin's attitude in 1882.

Whatever his reservations, however, Kropotkin gave his whole-hearted support and commitment to the Lyon movement in the persecution that was now directed against it. At the beginning of December, *Le Révolté* made a desperate appeal to the workers calling on them to unite and rise up against the bourgeoisie: 'Workers of France, your future lies in your own hands. This is a grave moment. It is now you must prove that Liberty, Equality and Fraternity of the workers are not empty words for you. If not – you must put your head back again under the yoke and prepare to suffer the whiplashes of your masters. You will have deserved them.'[18]

The upper classes began to panic as a result of the disturbances – they were terrified that some sort of popular revolt inspired and organised by the anarchists was about to break out. Both the press and the authorities encouraged the hysteria. Local papers campaigned for Kropotkin's arrest and the police did all they could to get him to incriminate himself, believing him to be a key figure in an international organisation.

> Almost every day I received letters, evidently written by spies of the international police, mentioning some dynamite plot, or mysteriously announcing that consignments of dynamite had been shipped to me. I made quite a collection of these letters, writing on each of them 'Police Internationale', and they were taken away by the French police when they made a search of my house.[19]

Meanwhile the government, apparently fearing that there was some sort of vast conspiracy to mount a general insurrection, intervened, and from the middle of October there was a series of searches and arrests in Paris and the Lyon area. The republican government wanted to crush the anarchist movement. But they realised there was no certainty of

being able to do this by simply arresting and putting on trial those that seemed to be implicated in the bomb attacks.[20] So they invoked the old law against the International instituted by the reactionary régime after the fall of the Commune, which allowed them, without much difficulty, to secure a fairly heavy sentence against the accused for simply belonging to the International.[21]

Kropotkin was arrested in the early morning of 22 December just after the death of his brother-in-law. The arrest was not unexpected as the police had searched the house earlier in the month, but it was carried out fairly brutally with Kropotkin being dragged away within hours of the family bereavement. To some extent, the fierce reaction of the authorities backfired on them because it fanned the flames of working-class resentment and encouraged popular sympathy for the anarchists.

Local reaction to Kropotkin's arrest provides a simple but eloquent illustration of this:

> Although the funeral was absolutely civil, which was a novelty in that little town, half the population was at the burial, to show my wife that the hearts of the poorer classes and the simple Savoy peasants were with us, and not with their rulers. When my trial was going on, the peasants used to come from the mountain villages to town to get the papers, and to see how my affair stood before the court.[22]

The outcome of the trial was probably a foregone conclusion before it began, as Kropotkin pointed out there was no real effort to prove anything about the International – the prosecution sought only to show that the defendants were anarchists and involved in building up their movement in the Lyon area. The anarchists were, however, allowed to make eloquent speeches – speeches which were widely reported with some admiration and even sympathy both at home and abroad. But all this made no difference to the verdict nor to the severity of the sentences meted out to the defendants. Kropotkin, Gautier, Bordat, Bernard, Martin, Liégeon and Ricard had to pay heavy fines and were each sentenced to four years imprisonment. (Thirty-nine others of the accused received sentences from six months to three years.) There was, nevertheless, widespread criticism of the conduct of the trial and of the sentences imposed. Clemenceau (a leading radical) immediately put forward a resolution for amnesty in the Chamber of Deputies which, although it was defeated, did secure 100 votes. Meanwhile popular sympathy in Lyon led Reclus to declare that 'Propaganda is spreading at a great pace in the prison. Every turnkey makes out he is an anarchist limiting himself timidly to the question of ways and means.'[23] The

mountaineers of Savoy fired rifle shots in Kropotkin's honour outside his home at Thonon. The anarchists had skilfully exploited the trial to publicise their ideals and Kropotkin played an important part in this.

He was convinced that the great revolution would soon come, and saw the trial as part of the pre-revolutionary process in which government repression against the first acts of revolt would encourage the development of the revolutionary spirit and thereby promote a rising tide of revolutionary action. Quite clearly, he believed that the role of the anarchists during the trial was to explain and promote this process. In his speech, therefore, he accused the republican authorities of trying to suppress basic freedom of thought and expression since there was no real basis for the charges made against the anarchists (a point not lost on the rest of the socialist movement – the Parti Ouvrier of the Lyonnais hastened to offer expressions of solidarity with the anarchists as a result of the persecutions).[24] He gave a blunt warning to the prosecution and jury that a judgement against the accused would be regarded as a declaration of war on the working class which would only promote the spread of disaffection. He called on them to join the revolutionaries in searching for a solution to the social problem, declaring that he would be happy if his words resulted in some bloodshed being avoided on the great day of social liquidation. On the other hand, he made it clear that should his warning go unheeded and the oppression of the workers continue, no mercy would be shown to the bourgeois oppressors by any decent man including himself.

I believe that the workers of the old world and the new have their eyes turned towards you, and are waiting, with emotion as much as impatience, for the verdict you are going to pronounce. If it is guilty, they will say that the International was only a pretext, and that what you wanted to get at was freedom of thought and expression.

It is my duty to warn you what the consequences of your judgement will be.

The workers will see it as a declaration of peace or war. Oh! Gentlemen, do not stir up new hatreds, do not prepare new misfortunes.

If you recall the teachings of history, you will see that the persecuted have increased proportionately to persecutions.

In 1869, three legal actions were undertaken against the International. That won it 200,000 members more.

In 1871 they thought they could drown the idea of the Commune in the blood of 35,000 Parisians, but that idea reappears today greater, stronger and brighter.

The day of reckoning is inevitable, and it will come in less than ten years. Believe me. Must you block up your ears? No Gentlemen. Join us, search with us for the solution to the formidable problem that is going to have to be resolved soon. If you are astonished by the boldness of my language, I would say to you, Gentlemen, that

I would be happy if everyone were to take heed of my words and would reckon myself a fortunate man if they could, on the day of social liquidation, spare some drops of blood.

However, should you persist in not listening, if the bourgeoisie continues to hold the workers under the yoke and to persecute and oppress them, the duty of every decent man is plain in advance. I will not fail in mine.[25]

All this was obviously calculated to ensure that the anarchists would emerge from the trial as martyrs to the cause of freedom, for after a speech like this the authorities were bound to demand a verdict of guilty against such skilful and inveterate opponents of the social order, in a situation where the flimsiness of the prosecution case had revealed that the trial was simply a device to crush the anarchist movement.

Meanwhile, Tressaud of Marseille, one of the accused, read out a declaration of their beliefs signed by forty-seven of the defendants. The document was probably written by Kropotkin who by now seems to have become the leading exponent of anarchist communist ideas.[26] To present what was in effect an eloquent exposé of the ideas of anarchist communism was a particularly astute thing to do at this stage, for the sympathy and interest evoked by the speeches meant that such a document would receive maximum publicity. Moreover, it had a long term propaganda value because it provided a clear general statement of the anarchist position which would be more likely to be published over and over again than the trial speeches, which, after all were more narrowly related to particular circumstances.

To what extent Kropotkin was primarily responsible for the way the anarchists conducted themselves at the Lyon trial is difficult to say. He was not, as the prosecution had insisted, the principal leader and organiser of the Lyon movement, because it was not an organisation in the usual sense, being simply a very loose association of independent groups. Indeed, the fact that he did not exercise any direction over the movement is abundantly clear in the refusal to adopt his proposal about re-establishing the International. He was, nevertheless, very highly regarded by French anarchists as an experienced campaigner of international reputation, so it was natural that he should play an important role in the action of the accused during the Lyon trial. Also, the approach embodied in the style and content of the Declaration is more characteristic of Kropotkin than of the Lyonnais anarchists themselves (apart from Gautier) if the *Droit Social* and *L'Etendard Révolutionnaire* are anything to go by.

It seems that Kropotkin did indeed emerge as a central figure in the

trial, partly because the police tried to present him as such, and partly because he was regarded as the leading figure in the court drama by the anarchists themselves in spite of the eloquent performance of Gautier.[27] In France itself the sort of impact Kropotkin had on the socialists in general is aptly illustrated by an *Open Letter* by Frédéric Borde published in *La Philosophie de l'Avenir*. Borde was a sort of socialist rationalist who had apparently met and talked with Kropotkin in Paris in 1879. Deeply moved by Kropotkin's defence speech at Lyon, he had hastened to publish an expression of solidarity which mixed praise with gentle admonition, by pointing out the anarchist 'error' in denouncing all authority:

> This trial which has kept the world of the workers in suspense I have followed with the liveliest interest, and have often applauded the dignity of attitude of the accused. But what has made a vivid impression on me is your defence, above all, the words at the end of it. This time I could not resist the cry of my conscience which imposed on me the double duty, in the first place to show to you publicly, the sympathy I feel for your good intentions and secondly to tell you frankly where you are mistaken.[28]

As regards Kropotkin's reputation outside France, it was of course true that before the trial he was already better known than the rest of the accused because of his work, both as a geographer and as a supporter of the revolutionists in Russia – certainly in England.[29] But now he became something of a celebrity. Influential radicals and academics in England as well as France began to agitate for his release, even though he insisted from the beginning that he did not wish to be singled out from the rest of his comrades for special treatment.[30] In fact, in his own account of the trial and its impact, even though he made it clear that he had played an important part in discomfiting the prosecution, Kropotkin was careful to stress the collective aspect of the propaganda effort of the accused:

> This trial – during which most brilliant anarchist speeches, reported by all the paper, were made by such first-rate speakers as the worker Bernard and Emile Gautier, during which all the accused took a very firm attitude, preaching our doctrines for a fortnight – had a powerful influence in clearing away false ideas about anarchism in France, and surely contributed to some extent to the revival of socialism in other countries . . . The contest between the accusers and ourselves was won by us, in the public opinion.[31]

His assessment of the impact of the Lyon trial is an interesting one for whilst he claimed that the anarchists had won a propaganda victory, he wrote in terms of success in clearing away misapprehensions about

anarchism rather than of any growth of the anarchist movement in France. This suggests that he was well aware of the immediate practical damage the movement had suffered, even though he was convinced that the popular sympathy and understanding engendered by the persecution would ensure the survival of the anarchist movement and its growth in the long term as the oppressed grew bolder.

The authorities certainly did not succeed in destroying the anarchist movement. The anarchist paper in Lyon reappeared defiantly as *La Lutte* in April 1883 and continued to reappear each time it was suppressed under different names until June 1884. The group at Vienne managed to survive through the period of repression.[32] Anarchists in Paris took a lively part in the agitation of the unemployed, and on 9 March 1883 Louise Michel led an attack on a baker's shop to cries of 'Bread, work or gunshot!' during a demonstration.[33] By 1885 there seems to have been a substantial movement there. Moreover, even though Grave actually claims that no anarchist newspaper apart from *Le Révolté* managed to establish itself until *Le Père Peinard* began to appear in 1889, the total number of issues of anarchist newspapers gradually increased.

The repression nevertheless, as Kropotkin seems to have recognised, did represent a serious set-back. In South Eastern France the movement had to cope with an intensification of police harassment and surveillance, as well as the loss of its leading agitators. The anarchist paper at Lyon, even though it spluttered on defiantly, exhibited that violent desperation so characteristic of a movement fighting for survival. The loose association of informal groupings of the Fédération de l'Est seems to have virtually collapsed. The groups at St Etienne gradually broke up, undermined by discouragement and internal squabbles, whilst the organisation in the Roanne area finally disappeared in 1885 after a new wave of arrests.[34] According to Grave, communications between Paris and the South East became difficult.[35] Even in Paris itself, leading anarchist agitators like Louise Michel and Emile Pouget were finally arrested and imprisoned in the summer of 1883. Meanwhile, some of those imprisoned as a result of the prosecutions at Lyon began to abandon the anarchist cause – most notably Gautier whose speech had perhaps made the greatest impact at the trial, as well as leading figures like Bernard from Lyon, and Liégeon from Villefranche.[36] Finally with Kropotkin's imprisonment the future of *Le Révolté* was for a time in doubt, for the responsibility of running the paper after a while became altogether too much for poor Herzig.[37] It

only survived through the help of Elisée Reclus who, as well as providing financial support, persuaded Jean Grave to undertake responsibility for editing the paper in 1884.[38]

Outside France the impact of the trial was perhaps more directly positive, and undoubtedly there is some truth in Kropotkin's suggestion that it contributed to the revival of socialism in other countries. In England the trial had been given prominent coverage in the press – some of it sympathetic.[39] The socialist movement had just begun to develop and a group calling itself the International Socialist Federation published a translation of the Lyon Declaration on 23 January 1883.[40] Perhaps some idea of the effect of the trial and Kropotkin's part in it on the socialist circles in London can be seen in the comment of Charlotte Wilson in 1885 who had herself been converted to anarchism by what she had read about the accused at Lyon.

> When the Lyons trial fixed public attention on the minds of men, who in the latter half of the nineteenth century were considered sufficiently dangerous to be condemned for their opinions alone, the corrupt and hypocritical clique which calls itself 'Society' contented itself with a sneer at mad fanaticism, and congratulating itself that the disturbing element was suppressed, passed on to seek some fresh excitement. Nevertheless, when the noble words of Kropotkin's defence rang through the length and breadth of France, they found an echo in the hearts of all honest seekers after truth.

This piece appeared in the second issue of an individualist anarchist paper started in England by Henry Seymour in 1885.[41] By the time of Kropotkin's arrival in England after his release from prison in 1886, there was a small group of anarchists associated with Charlotte Wilson whilst anarchist tendencies were developing in the Commonweal Group of William Morris.

Meanwhile Kropotkin's pamphlets had begun to appear in translation in countries outside France and Switzerland. For example translations of his *Aux Jeunes Gens* – which was to become one of the most translated and widely read of all his pamphlets, appeared in Warsaw in 1883, in Milan, London and New York (in German) in 1884, in The Hague and Cadiz in 1885 and in Athens in 1886.[42] And from 1886 anarchist movements throughout Europe were to become familiar with Kropotkin's writings. But the irony is that although he became such an influential figure in the European anarchist movement, he never again had that impact on the day-to-day struggles which had characterised his activity in the Jura and even in France in the late 1870s and early 1880s.

Once in prison, Kropotkin's links with the outside world were severely restricted. During the three months at the St Paul jail in Lyon for the trial and appeal, he was allowed to continue his work for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the *Nineteenth Century*. But many of his letters were confiscated.

The Director of the prison had reiterated to me on many occasions the formal promise of never sequestrating any of my letters, without letting me know that such letters had been confiscated. It was all I claimed. Notwithstanding that, several of my letters were confiscated, without any notice, and my wife, ill at that time, remained anxious without news from me. One of my letters, stolen in this way, was even transmitted to the Procureur Fabreguette, who read it before the Court of Appeal.[43]

Visiting arrangements were so bad that he found he could not even hold a conversation with his wife.

The situation at Clairvaux to which the anarchists were sent to serve out their sentences was better. The political prisoners had their own special quarters which were fairly comfortable. Visiting facilities were much more humane than they had been at St Paul, and the severe restrictions on visits during the first year were subsequently relaxed particularly after Kropotkin's illness in 1884.[44] But the prisoners were kept under constant surveillance night and day. They were not allowed to receive any socialist newspapers or literature, and although there was no restriction on the number of letters they could send or receive their correspondence was subject to severe censorship. Kropotkin was allowed to continue his work for scientific journals but only so long as it did not include anything dealing with the social question or Russian affairs. In such circumstances, Kropotkin's contact with the anarchist movement during his imprisonment was of necessity very limited – particularly until the daily visits from his wife began in consequence of his illness after the first year. Such visits undoubtedly enabled him to get some idea of developments in the world outside but they could not enable him to affect them in any way. 'Of course, when we heard of the active political life which was going on in France, we resented very much our forced inactivity,' he declared ruefully in his *Memoirs*, adding somewhat defiantly, 'but one who casts in his lot with an advanced party must be prepared to spend a number of years in prison, and he need not grudge it. He feels that even during his imprisonment he remains not quite an inactive part of the movement which spreads and strengthens the ideas that are dear to him.'[45] Manifestly, there were some breaches in prison security – for example it is very difficult to

believe that Kropotkin had actually been allowed to send out the somewhat caustic letter he wrote in response to the failure of the international appeal for his release, which appeared in *Le Matin* in July 1884.[46] And as for those purely scientific articles for the *Nineteenth Century* which appeared during his imprisonment at Clairvaux, either Kropotkin evaded or hood-winked the censor to get them out or he must have written them at Lyon before starting his sentence for most of them refer to Russian affairs and to the social question. The latter explanation seems unlikely, so it would seem that prison did not silence Kropotkin the propagandist altogether.[47] Nevertheless it is clear that imprisonment effectively excluded him from any real involvement in the anarchist movement from the spring of 1883 until January 1886.

Anarchists in the face of repression now became positively obsessed with the spontaneous act of revolt of the individual and with propaganda by deed. Elisée Reclus in a letter to his brother Elie at the time of the Lyon trial, had expressed anxiety about the excessively violent language of some of the anarchists. 'But, we shall not always be in this period of triumph and other defeats will come. This appeal made by some of our friends appears to me to be mistaken. In the same way, there is no doubt that a few will still let themselves be carried away by ridiculously violent language.'[48] But the press of *Le Révolté* now under Reclus' supervision, actually published the following poster of a Parisian anarchist group. 'Yes, we are guilty of pursuing by every means, the spoken and written word, BY THE DEED . . . that is to say, by revolutionary acts whatever they may be, of putting our ideas into practice and applying our theories. Yes, we are capable of any infamy, any crime, and declare them aloud, we claim them as ours, we glorify in them.'[49] All this, of course, could have simply meant the putting into practice of anarchist ideas, but in fact the language is so violent that it conjures up a picture of anarchism as a series of violent and shocking crimes. In the Lyon area the anarchist press extolled the importance of individual initiative and the spontaneous action of the masses in striking blows against the economic order. Any idea of organised struggle was to be abandoned in favour of a sort of continuous anarchistic guerilla war against the bourgeoisie. The barricades and the cannon would be replaced by the bomb or any other means of attack which could be utilised by any small group of individuals: 'We must not in a word, recoil from the use of any methods, however barbarous they may seem.'[50] In Paris the same kind of talk was rife in anarchist circles.

But in May 1885, *Le Révolté* published a criticism of verbal violence

which declared: 'Verbal violence should not be seen as the mark of the true anarchist.'[51] The paper was thereupon attacked for being too theoretical and moderate. Grave argued much as Kropotkin had done that the task of a newspaper was to help develop those ideas it wanted to see triumph in the revolution. It was no good exciting the spirit of revolt without generating a real understanding of anarchist ideas for this would mean that popular revolutionary energy would be exploited just as it had been in the past so as to deny the people their emancipation. He insisted on the need for those who carried out acts of revolt to have a clear understanding of the ideals which inspired their action in order to avoid the many blunders that had so often been made. He felt that even in the most militant anarchist circles those who expressed themselves in violent language did not necessarily understand anarchist ideas. So, committed though they were to individual initiative, anarchists could only be sure that action would benefit the anarchist cause where their supporters understood how to put *anarchist ideas into practice*: 'If we want our theories on individual initiative to be entirely fruitful, if we want them to be profitable to the cause we are defending, those who claim to be supporters of our ideas must first know how to put them into practice.' There can be little doubt but that Grave must have had in mind here the actions of Paul-Marie Curien and Louis Chavès which had been applauded in anarchist papers, even though they revealed a very limited grasp of anarchist ideals.[52] The article went on to insist that once a paper had given a clear exposition of anarchist theories supporters would know what to do, and that it was both useless and counterproductive to issue specific calls to action and threats. Persistent appeals of this nature did not produce action and consequently inspired ridicule rather than fear. He argued that a propaganda of menaces showed impotence rather than strength for true strength expressed itself in action. Obviously Grave felt that those embarking on a serious project of revolutionary action did not advertise the fact in advance. And it seems likely that, like Kropotkin, he was worried about the dangers of attracting police attention and persecution of the movement, which would actually prevent anarchists from taking action. But his reaction to the ranters (*braillards*) and their criticism of *Le Révolté* was more censorious than Kropotkin's would have been:

> From the moment we arrived in Paris, I was swamped with letters reproaching us for our lack of revolutionism.
>
> But what the wretches who wrote to us understood by making the workers grasp

the meaning of the present-day society they had to overthrow, was quite simply reduced to phraseology, where the word revolution would be repeated four times in the same line, or where the sword, torch and bomb would be invoked. How void this was of ideas – replaced only by the virulence of epithets!

That would be sufficient for them.

I let them know what I thought of their particular revolution. Unfortunately, there were many who took their overabundance of epithets for revolutionism. They had conviction, which was worse although it was not from their ranks that the people who acted came. All their energy was expended on excesses . . . in words, satisfying themselves by seeing preached what they were incapable of accomplishing.[53]

In effect, Grave had accused comrades of an obsession with violent propaganda which displayed little grasp of anarchist ideas or genuine capacity for revolutionary action. Louise Michel's style of propaganda had been very much of the type Grave so sharply criticised,[54] yet no one would have dared accuse her of a lack of ideas or an incapacity for action, particularly after her involvement in the march of the unemployed on the bakers' shops in 1883 – one of the most significant revolutionary acts associated with the anarchist movement at this time. So not surprisingly, the argument generated dissension in anarchist circles and although Grave claimed that *Le Révolté* managed to overcome the hostility to its approach, he had to admit that the debate continued. 'By dint of holding our own against the ranters we ended up by asserting ourselves. But *Le Révolté*, *La Révolte* and *Les Temps Nouveaux* are crammed with articles where I answered those who only understood revolutionary propaganda in the form of vitriolic articles.'[55]

There was, of course, no real substance to the charge that *Le Révolté* was too theoretical and too moderate. During 1883 and 1884 the paper had expressed fairly uncritical support for the Mano Negra in Andalusia and for anarchist terrorism in Germany. Certainly, this seems to have been modified by Grave's increasing anxiety about political terrorism and theft, culminating in his sharp criticism of the former and denunciation of the latter (in the form of *la reprise individuelle*) in 1885. But the paper remained uncompromisingly revolutionary.

The Mano Negra of Andalusia was a clandestine agrarian terrorist movement which appears to have been similar to that of La Bande Noire in France.[56]

In 1881, with the replacement of the repressive conservative government by a liberal régime in Spain, the Spanish Federation had been able

to emerge from secrecy as a new open organisation – La Federación de los Trabajores de la Región Española. The FTRE, however, under the influence of the more moderate, trade unionist orientated Catalonian section, at its first Congress in 1881 in Barcelona, had tried to break away from the terrorist preoccupation that had characterised the years of repression. Nonetheless, in 1883, the government had launched a savage persecution against the FTRE by accusing it of being involved with the Mano Negra, a charge it hotly denied. Indeed in a sharp contrast to the Lyonnais anarchist movement in their response to La Bande Noire, the Spanish Federation had expressed no sympathy with the Mano Negra, both its newspaper, *La Revista Social* and the federal commission seem to have been hostile whilst the FTRE had actually denounced it at the annual Congress at Valencia in October 1883.[57]

Throughout the persecution *Le Révolté* had expressed sympathy with the Spanish Federation for what they endured, and insisted, as the Spanish anarchists themselves had done, that the activities of the Mano Negra had been used as an excuse to attack the Spanish movement. But it had sharply criticised the Spanish Federation for its denunciation of the Mano Negra, reminding them that terrorist acts were an essential part of the pre-revolutionary process. 'Theft, assassination, confiscation, when carried out by the bourgeoisie, can produce only revolt by the victim, that is why we have applauded the acts of the Black Hand. The Spanish Federation has always acclaimed the Social Revolution; we must not forget that the acts of the vilified society are the precursors of it.'[58] Of course the reaction of *Le Révolté* here was related to a wider issue than that of criticising the Spanish Federation for failing to express solidarity with a grassroots revolutionary movement. It was all part of the developing struggle between anarchist communists and collectivists in Spain – a struggle which had begun to develop at the FTRE Congress of 1882 at Seville and which, in 1883 and 1884, led to the secret congress (January 1883 and December 1884; held by a breakaway revolutionary section of the movement in Andalusia sympathetic to the tactics of the Mano Negra and calling themselves Los Desheredados. When the anarchists themselves had embarked on a campaign of particularly violent propaganda by deed, *Le Révolté* had been sympathetic.

German-speaking anarchist groups, in the face of mounting persecution, had held a secret meeting at St Gallen (in Switzerland) in August 1883, and reflecting the mood of the London Congress they had committed themselves to a loose association of small independent

groups using all possible methods and available weapons in the struggle against the ruling class in Austria and Germany.[59] A series of murders and robberies followed in which anarchists who had attended the St Gallen meeting were clearly involved.

In Austria, where the anarchist movement had emerged out of government persecution of the radical section of the socialist movement, the authorities' savage response to a peaceful demonstration of workers in Vienna had provided a fertile environment for the emergence of particularly violent notions of propaganda by deed.[60] On 23 November 1883 a banker, Heilbronner, had been robbed and beaten to death in Stuttgart, and this had been followed by the particularly violent robbery and murder of the money changer, Heinrich Eisert and his family in Vienna in January 1884. The Vienna Police Commissioner, Hlubek, had been shot in December 1883 whilst a police agent, Bloch, had met his death in a similar fashion from an assassin's bullet just over a month later.

An article in *Le Révolté* (possibly written by Werner) in response to the *Sozialdemokrat*'s condemnation of the Heilbronner murder had insisted that anarchists had to decide how to react to this manner of attacking private property.[61] The writer had summarised the argument of the German anarchist papers which claimed that such methods were necessary to overcome popular prejudice in favour of private property and to get the masses used to regarding everything as its own, that the struggle against private property necessarily involved repossession of the product of labour to use it for the common good (i.e. for propaganda or anything else to help the fundamental change in society). He had concluded:

> As for us, we find an unshakeable logic in the argument given. Either private property is justified and so one does not have the right to attack the property of anyone, no more that of the individual than that of the possessing classes: all communism is only a joke and all communists are thieves, or on the other hand private property is robbery committed at the expense of the generality of individuals, and it is necessary to take back this property by every means to return it to the ownership of that generality.

Later in 1884 *Le Révolté* had responded to the condemnation and execution of the chief anarchist participants in the murders in Austria, particularly Stellmacher, by hailing them as martyrs to the anarchist cause.

> His sublime example [i.e. that of Stellmacher] will inspire the proletarians of all countries, with the courage to continue the struggle against their oppressors and

> the keen instruments of despotism without hesitation and without fear, whatever may be said by 'socialists' whose life is passed in parleying with our enemies... the hour is not far off when all the proletariat will rally around the black flag, the symbol of the struggle without respite or mercy, and the names of the Stellmachers and other initiators of the true battle between Capital and Labour will shine one day in the history of the social revolution which has now commenced.[62]

But Stellmacher, whilst admitting responsibility for the shooting of the police spy, Bloch, had denied involvement in the Eisart murders. Kammerer however, who, as well as claiming responsibility for the Hlubek murder, had admitted being associated with the Heilbronner and Eisart murders, had also been celebrated as a brave revolutionary. But attention had been focussed primarily on his assassination of Hlubek. 'He [Kammerer] belonged to an active group, rid society of the spy Hlubek and took part in several acts in the service of humanity.'[63] No specific reference had been made to the robbery involving murder except to stress that Kammerer's efforts to secure millions for the anarchist cause, which had unfortunately failed, had been undertaken with a selfless disregard for his own hunger. Now Grave was editor it would seem that the earlier sympathy with robbery involving murder had cooled – particularly perhaps after the Eisart murders.

In Germany, meanwhile, the anarchists had also embarked on a campaign of violent deeds, although here the attacks had been directed more narrowly against the state than in Austria. In September 1883 Reinsdorf had organised an abortive attempt to dynamite the Emperor, the Crown Prince and a number of other public dignitaries at the dedication of a national monument at Niederwald. Finally brought to trial for this at the end of 1884, he had bravely exploited the opportunity the hearing offered for giving a public exposition of anarchist principles. But his speech revealed an uncompromisingly violent concept of revolutionary action which envisaged a massacre of the entire bourgeoisie. 'The day of the supreme social revolution approaches, the oppressed are nearly all ready for revolt. The workers have enough dynamite at their disposal to blow up the whole bourgeoisie. That is what will soon be done. I die with the cry of Long Live Anarchy!'[64] Apart from the Niederwald plot, the anarchists in Germany had carried out a series of acts of revenge against the police which included the murder in January 1885 of the chief of Frankfurt Police, Rumpf, who had been primarily responsible for the persecutions of the anarchists. Again, *Le Révolté* had reserved most of its expressions of enthusiastic support for attacks on the police. Indeed, it had been particularly pleased at the assassin-

ation of Rumpf. 'Bravo for the German anarchists! Not many threats, but acts instead! That is much better than endless threats and no action.'[65] Reinsdorf's bomb plot had attracted less attention and interest although a great deal of sympathy and support for Reinsdorf himself had been expressed by *Le Révolté*. The trial had certainly received detailed coverage and the paper had responded with a spirited leader article in Reinsdorf's defence when the veteran anarchist campaigner had been attacked as a police spy by the social democrats.[66]

The general impression of the reaction of *Le Révolté* to developments in the German-speaking anarchist movements at this period was that its editors were sympathetic and supportive, partly because of the persecution directed against them both by the governments and the social democrats, and partly because of its admiration for the boldness of the Germans in taking action where the French had been content to issue threats. Nevertheless, there had probably been some anxiety about the darker aspects of some of the murders, for Grave, no less than Kropotkin, had been repelled by the implications of indiscriminate killing. Equally, the anxiety about political terrorism had continued. And in June 1885 Grave declared that those who acted on their own initiative could sometimes be mistaken and other anarchists had the right to say so even though no one, least of all a party, had the right to condemn the acts of comrades. Having hopefully covered himself against the charge of being disloyal or too moderate, he then went on to complain that comrades were still allowing themselves so often to be drawn into political terrorism which did not promote the anarchist cause, and he expressed the hope that anarchists would direct their efforts into the economic field which was still so badly understood by the masses.[67]

Meanwhile, in Switzerland, what remained of the Jura Federation (probably little more than the group associated with *Le Révolté* plus German and Italian anarchists taking refuge there) had finally declared for propaganda by deed in July 1883 (i.e. a month before the secret meeting at St Gallen). In doing so it was influenced as much by the increasing preoccupation with dramatic action by individuals and small groups in German anarchist circles as the almost frantic reaction to the repression that had followed the Lyon trial in France. This was a step Kropotkin had previously successfully resisted. Certainly it was 'propaganda by deed *on the economic ground*', but this particular formula was only agreed after the proponents of action against the

state (probably Germans and Italians, although delegates were not named) had been persuaded that it was actually implicit in economic action and that the latter was indeed the most effective way of preparing for a popular revolution along anarchist lines.[68] Undoubtedly, they had been influenced here by the popular impact of the act of Fournier which one delegate had argued appealed much more to the workers than any attack on an officer of the state. This discussion of the Jurassians also made it clear that propaganda by deed was not seen simply in terms of dramatic acts of violence. 'In the application of propaganda by deed to the economic field, the smallest act has its value and tacitly receives the assent of all those who are suffering from the bad organisation of society.' Neither was it seen as a substitute for other forms of propaganda, but rather as another way by which individuals could work for the development of communist ideas of popular expropriation.

> That is not to say, when we pose this question of the necessity for propaganda by deed, that verbal and written propaganda have to be put on one side or rejected as having had their day. No! According to his temperament, each individual can work for the development of communist ideas, and it is precisely for that reason that propaganda by deed has its own place in this work of development.

This concept of propaganda by deed, to the extent that it was envisaged in terms of a primarily economic struggle not narrowly related to a programme of fairly indiscriminate violence against authority, does not at first seem to conflict with Kropotkin's view of revolutionary agitation. But the problem here is that the essential notion of propaganda by deed still seems to be that of a struggle in which action is undertaken primarily as a propaganda exercise.

> What we have to do above all, is to sow in people's minds the idea of expropriation and this idea will only be fruitful in the future in so far as we have advocated it by deeds, for deeds are better than anything for propagating an idea. In a word, it is the apprenticeship in expropriation that we have to provide, that is to get the public used to taking possession of property which so many people consider to be a sacrilege. We have to show the public, that only in expropriation is there safety for all and that there would be no reason for the next Revolution if this general effort was not sanctioned by the idea of expropriation.[69]

As we have seen, Kropotkin understood the important propaganda effect of action, but always insisted that this effect would only be achieved by serious acts of revolt undertaken primarily as a natural and necessary expression of revolutionary ideals. It could be argued that there is an element of hair-splitting in all this, for by this time the

expression was being used in *Le Révolté* in a sense virtually indistinguishable from that of Kropotkin's 'acts of revolt'.[70] But it is quite clear that where acts are primarily propaganda gestures they can lead to a debasement of revolutionary ideals. And in fact at this point the idea of *La Reprise Individuelle* began to emerge in French anarchist circles – a development which shows the morally murky waters into which the movement was drifting as a result of propaganda by deed. This very passage could quite well have provided an inspiration and justification for acts of petty theft particularly in the light of the intense preoccupation with individual initiative with which it was associated. According to Grave, on his arrival in Paris he discovered that ultra-individualist ideas were developing among anarchist groups in the city and he had been obliged to set about trying to counteract a trend which threatened to turn the movement into a party of petty criminals.[71] In an article in June 1885, he argued that a thief resembled the bourgeois oppressor: 'Both are parasites; both have only one aim, to live as much as possible off the fat of the land, without producing anything. The one exploits us through the capital he has already; the other seeks to *steal* [*barbotter*] this capital; who knows, perhaps, to exploit us tomorrow.'[72] And he insisted that whilst the paper would always express solidarity with acts which aimed at popular expropriation – for example where workers took over workshops or the destitute took food from shops – it would reject any solidarity with thieves. It is significant that Grave did not include any reference to stealing for funds for the propaganda in his list of genuine acts of expropriation. This would seem to represent an abandonment of the support for theft which was expressed in *Le Révolté* at the end of 1883 in the wake of the Heilbronner robbery. Clearly, Grave's earlier anxieties, only hinted at in the reaction to events in Germany in 1884–85, had now become explicit in the fact of a situation in French anarchist circles where there was no real distinction between theft for the cause and theft for personal gain.[73]

The general impression of the development of *Le Révolté* during Kropotkin's imprisonment was that it had responded sympathetically to the preoccupation with propaganda by deed even when it had reservations about some of the violent acts of political terrorism and robbery involved, and had condemned the moderate approach of the FTRE in Spain. But under Grave's editorship, there had been an increasing anxiety about the most violent and extreme sections of the movement, particularly as expressed in anarchist circles in Paris.

What therefore was Kropotkin's reaction to all this on his emergence from Clairvaux prison at the beginning of 1886? In June he gave a fairly clear indication of his views in a letter to Georg Herzig.

Herzig, like Grave, had been disturbed by the verbal terrorism of anarchists in Paris. Kropotkin shared their concern but he was obviously worried about the hostility generated against *Le Révolté* in anarchist circles in the French capital by the sharpness of Grave's criticism. 'Grave has attacked the ranters [*braillards*] in *Le Révolté* of Paris and has alienated a large number of Parisian readers. He has done it because he thought thus, knowing full well that his way of seeing it would be ill-received by those who make opinion among Parisian anarchists.'[74] Kropotkin in fact endeavoured to reassure Herzig that the 'braillage' in Paris had been artificially sustained by Serraux's friends and successors, and that it was now disappearing; he urged his friend not to denigrate it any longer, insisting that it had been necessary and had also given good results.[75] Obviously Kropotkin had little sympathy with verbal terrorism (he referred to it elsewhere in the letter as 'boasting about dynamite') but he was not prepared to condemn it as Grave had done, almost certainly recognising that in doing so he would be casting aspersions on the activity of genuine militants including the charismatic Louise Michel. Indeed in this respect he probably shared the view of Reclus, who whilst expressing dislike of excessive verbal violence had declared: 'But if we are proud of the noble conduct of some, we have to be able to accept the others and take account of the myriad of differences in the milieu.'[76]

Herzig was, in fact, very disconsolate about the state of anarchist propaganda. He had complained that it was too abstract, did not concentrate on the essential economic aspect and was estranged from the people. Kropotkin agreed and accepting the criticism both of his own propaganda and that of Grave he urged his friend to do something about it instead of bewailing the situation without taking action.

> Here is how I would reason if I were in your place; Peter is not popular enough; he is too much of a philosopher, his argument is too heavy, etc., etc.... What we need is someone to write in a *popular way* which is accessible to all. Grave is not doing it. X is doing it, but falls into boasting about dynamite; in short no one is doing it. Very well, I, myself, will do it. If I do it badly, it does not matter; I will lead the way, then others better gifted, or in a better position to do something because of their special skills, will do it better than me.[77]

Kropotkin indeed conceded that his own writing was perhaps too philosophical to be understood by those who did not read much but,

reminding his friend how difficult it had always been to produce propaganda more accessible to the people, he invited Herzig to take on this important task with his unreserved approval and support. Grave had been prepared to make no such concessions about the propaganda of *Le Révolté* – an intractable reaction with which Kropotkin manifestly did not sympathise. But he did not like Herzig's critical and negative approach, and he pointed out to him his own preference for going off and doing something differently rather than simply criticising all the time.

Kropotkin was very distressed by the tone and attitude of Herzig's letter, for it seems to have associated the criticism of anarchist propaganda with expressions of disillusionment with anarchist comrades. And he angrily reproached his friend both with his impatience and intolerance:

> You talk both to me and Werner, about feelings of disillusionment. What right have you to dare to speak about that! When you were thrust into the work, what did you expect to find; the Revolution after two years of effort, as Brousse did? Or did you think you would only find men dedicated to the cause, without base personal passions? But if humanity was like that, if ideal-men were as common as all that, humanity would not need our services it would have done without us; it would already be in a state of anarchy.

The mood of Herzig's letter reminded Kropotkin of that of Costa, Brousse and Bernard on the eve of their defection from the anarchist cause, and he feared that whilst his friend would not change sides as they had done, he might well give up the fight altogether and become a mere acid critic who did nothing as some others had done:

> I beg you, do all you can, put all your strength into moving away from this kind of idea. For you will not do as Brousse, Bernard and Costa did who, having inveighed against the vanities and bad features of socialists and the weaknesses of their friends, concluded that it was necessary to go over to another party and to finish up leading the masses, giving themselves promotion at the same time. Now if you persist in this sort of thinking, you will be led into folding your arms, and you will plunge into the life of a retired misanthropist. Your life would be sad indeed, particularly after you have had a moment of inspiration . . . no, no, and a thousand times no, I would not have you like Zhukovsky, Peron, Lefrançais . . . criticising, criticising and criticising again without doing anything.[78]

Kropotkin himself was deeply concerned about the condition of the anarchist movement. Obviously worried about the damage it had sustained and might sustain from disillusionment such as this, as well as from squabbles and defections, he expressed anger and dismay at its

inadequacy in the face of the enormous task he believed it had to undertake:

When I think of the task to be undertaken so that the next revolution profits the worker just a little, I am sometimes overcome by terror. You know what has become of all these parties, which were formerly socialist, today they have only one aim: the scramble for gain. There is only one, one single party which remained expropriationist. And when I see just how small it is, how short it is of men of good-will, I get furious about it. There are a thousand ways of interfering with private property. So that the truth may be discovered, we have to force the popular spirit – that vague entity which results from millions of aspirations, tendencies and desires – into speaking, into putting its ideas into words. It is up to us to do that. If we do not do it no one will.

Kropotkin was insisting that because all other parties had abandoned the principle of popular expropriation, it was only the anarchists who could carry out the essential task of helping the people define its formula for the socialisation of wealth so that the workers would benefit from the next revolution. It seems that he was worried about more than the inadequacy of the size and strength of the anarchist movement – he was also afraid that anarchists themselves did not have a clear idea of what they must do in a situation where the masses had confused ideas about attacking private property. There is a clear implication here that Kropotkin was anxious about the failure to concentrate on revolutionary action which was economic rather than political. There is also a hint of concern about the approach to expropriation, perhaps indicating an unease about *la reprise individuelle* which was later to be transformed into hostility.

Kropotkin, although generally more tolerant than Grave, did not share the radical views about property and theft which had probably already begun to be formulated by Reclus. Reclus saw capitalism as a social and economic system based essentially on theft where the capitalists appropriated the means of production which rightly belonged to the community and stole from the masses the fruit of their labour. As early as 1875 in denouncing mutualist ideas he had argued that all private property was based on theft and exploitation.[79] In 1879, if indeed he was the author of the article 'Il faut se décider, il est temps', he was arguing that it was impossible to take a principled line against theft in a situation where every attempt on the part of the oppressed to take back some of what had been stolen from them was always denounced as theft by the oppressors.[80] In his articles of 1879 and 1880 he discussed capitalism in terms of robbery.[81]

Kropotkin, unlike Grave, preferred to give a clear exposition of what he thought the anarchist approach should be, rather than to attack action he did not like. So it is no surprise that instead of embarking on acrimonious exchanges with Malatesta or any of the French or German anarchists who favoured political terrorism or violent robberies, he concentrated his efforts on arguing for an alternative approach to revolution he believed to be more consistent with anarchist aims and ideals. He insisted: 'If the next revolution is to be a social revolution, it will have to distinguish itself from preceding revolutions, not only by its aim but also by its methods. A new aim requires new methods.'[82] Popular expropriation was the key factor in all this, and his main preoccupation after his release from prison was to explain and underline its vital significance for the social revolution. In July in 'La pratique de l'expropriation' he declared that, until now, everyone had been too preoccupied with the initial dramatic violence of overthrowing the old régime:

All of us have read so much about the dramatic side of revolutions, and so little about their work of revolutionary demolition, that many of us can only see the theatrical side of these great events – the struggle of the first days, the barricades. But that struggle, that first skirmish, is soon over, and it is only after the defeat of the old governments that the real revolutionary task begins.

In his view, even acts of vengeance against hated exploiters were mere accidents of the preliminary struggle, and here he made reference to the recent lynching of Watrin, a hated deputy director of the local mining company, by angry strikers at Decazeville – an event which had generated a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm in anarchist circles. 'The Watrins and the Thomases will pay for their unpopularity. But this will only be an accident of the struggle. This will still not be the revolution; nothing will yet have been done.'[83]

He expressed no enthusiasm for the Haymarket bomb in Chicago and his outrage at the trial and condemnation of the Chicago anarchists in September ended with an urgent call for the workers to disarm the bourgeoisie by taking their weapons – capital – if they wanted to avoid a massacre of all socialists and their sympathisers in further conflicts.

Workers, reflect about this trial, reflect on this attitude of the bourgeois democrats! Woe to you if you let yourselves be vanquished in the next resort to arms! Woe to your wives and your children! Then there will be extermination, relentless and ferocious! Do not lose a moment before you disarm the bourgeoisie and do not

forget that their weapon – more potent than their rifles – is the capital they possess.[84]

The real work of the revolution was popular expropriation. And in 'Les Ateliers Nationaux' in September he focussed his argument graphically on what he called the 'question of bread', maintaining that the revolution could only succeed if all the resources of society were taken over by the people and shared out so that from the first day of the revolution no one would go hungry:

We must assure bread for the people in revolt and the question of bread must take precedence over all others. If it is resolved in the interest of the people – the revolution will already be on the right track; for in order to resolve the question of foodstuffs we must accept the principle of equality, and the principle of equality will then impress itself on all other solutions.[85]

This of course was the theme of his important work *The Conquest of Bread* which appeared in 1892, a work for which these articles were the first studies.

In March 1886, fearful that he might be re-arrested, Kropotkin left for England after giving a final public address on anarchism to an audience of several thousand. In a letter to Herzig he declared, 'I have been called to London to establish an anarchist paper; the funds are there and I am going to set about it with fervour.'[86] In England, however, he was always a foreigner, and his position in the emerging anarchist movement, where there was nothing comparable to the *Révolté* group, was an uneasy one. So, once removed from direct involvement in the life of the anarchist movement on the continent, whatever misgivings he may have had about Grave's editorship of *Le Révolté*, he almost inevitably concerned himself mainly with the task of developing the ideas of anarchist communism – something he believed urgently needed to be done, and for which his talents were well suited.

There was no fundamental change in Kropotkin's views after 1886. He continued to develop his ideas regarding the action of revolutionary minorities. He did, however, attach progressively less importance to isolated acts of revolt, particularly after 1880, when he saw much greater opportunities for developing collective revolutionary action in the new militant trade unionism. This change of emphasis was partly due to the sort of activity with which individual acts became associated as a result of propaganda by deed and the vogue for *la reprise individualle* in French circles which eventually spawned a kind of individualist illegalist anarchism; it was also due to the fact that the

spate of terrorist acts of the 1890s, which scared the authorities into taking repressive action against the movement, were not in his view consistent with the anarchist ideal and did little or nothing to promote popular revolt.

With regard to *la reprise individuelle*, *La Révolté*, in spite of its avowed opposition to such a tactic, had felt obliged to express support for the anarchists Duval in 1887 and Pini in 1889 when condemned by the courts for theft, because it was clear that they had stolen not because they wanted to live off the labour of others, but to reclaim their individual share of the wealth appropriated by capital from labour. Kropotkin, who did not think it either practicable or desirable to identify the individual share of the product of labour, was dismayed by the way all this had transformed theft into an anarchist principle. In the spring of 1888, he wrote a series of articles on anarchist morality in which he argued that if anarchists, having declared war on the ways of thinking and acting of the oppressors, yet proceeded to deceive, intrigue and cheat as their masters did, they would not only lose their active energy as a result of the failure to act in conformity with their ideals, they would also be regarded as petty, contemptible and feeble by the rest of humanity.[87] A clear division of opinion opened up between Kropotkin and Reclus on this issue with the publication in *La Révolte*, 21 November 1891, or an article, 'Travail et vol' by Paul Reclus which argued that there was no real difference between a livelihood obtained through work and that obtained through theft. Elisée Reclus actually saw nothing wrong in the idea of individual appropriation as an essential part of the anarchist principle of popular expropriation as long as the individual concerned was not primarily motivated by a desire to live off the labour of others; they were all in any case, he argued, involved in the theft and pillage which characterised the present system.[88] Kropotkin, however, insisted that as the party of revolution they could not perpetuate such things as theft which were the essence of the society they wished to destroy: the people had too much sense to be taken in by such sophisms as theft in the name of equality, deceit in the name of liberty and the passing of counterfeit money to the poor in the name of solidarity.[89] Both Malatesta and Merlino supported this view, with the latter in *Nécessité et bases d'une entente* (May 1892; going so far as to insist that there should be a complete break with the partisans of individual action because such actions actually did nothing to advance the cause of revolution and in fact alienated the masses from the anarchists.

Kropotkin had similar misgivings about individual acts of violence which were associated with *la reprise individuelle*. He wrote, for instance, a very hostile article about the murder committed by Ravachol in connection with the robbery at Chambles in 1891.[90] He sympathised, however, with the desperation which drove men like Luccheni to stab the hapless Elizabeth of Austria in 1898 simply because she was a member of the wealthy classes who had given no thought to the sufferings of the poor.[91] And even though horrified by the theatre bomb at Barcelona in 1893, he was prevailed upon by Grave to withdraw a proposed article condemning it, thereby accepting that this too was probably an act of desperation.[92] Such violence, he argued, was to be expected from the oppressed classes for they had been taught such a total contempt for human life by oppressors who over the years had not hesitated to torture and kill thousands of workers and peasants. But, like Malatesta who insisted in his pamphlet *Un peu de théorie* (1896) that the constructive work of the revolution could not be based on hate, Kropotkin, if he refused either to criticise or condemn such acts of terror, certainly did not advocate them: a preoccupation with violence directed indiscriminately against a class as a principle of the revolution itself would produce only a blood bath and the state terror associated with jacobinism and dictatorship.[93] He argued that, in fact, the main problem was that all other socialist parties, by virtue of their preoccupation with leadership and government, virtually encouraged the masses, instead of developing their ideas, to think about nothing else but vengeance and bloodshed.

He admired and applauded the attacks on notorious oppressors of the people like the assassination of President Carnot by Caserio in 1894 and of Casanovas by Angiolillo in 1897. But he had pointed out in 1891 that although the development of the revolutionary spirit had gained immensely from heroic acts of individuals, this was not the way to make revolutions:[94] it had been an error of the anarchists of 1881 in the wake of the assassination of Alexander II to imagine that a handful of revolutionists armed with a few bombs would be sufficient to make a social revolution. However, with regard to the *attentats* of the 1890s he had serious doubts about the motivation of those drawn to the movement by such tactics. In a letter to Nettlau in 1902[95] he actually complained that the youth attracted by the drama and flamboyance of the acts of Ravachol, Vaillant and Pauwels soon lost interest when they had to apply themselves to the more pedestrian tasks associated with building up a popular movement – their individualistic anarchism was

only a foolish egotism. Although Kropotkin had earlier insisted that it was the integrity of thought and feeling which inspired an act of revolt that mattered and that he would never judge it according to its utility, he came very near to doing so here. Unlike Reclus,[96] he did not think that any act of revolt against oppression was necessarily both just and good – he was too anxious both about the damaging effect on the popular image of anarchism and the debasing influence on the movement itself of fairly indiscriminate violence which claimed the innocent among its victims. It is perhaps significant that he never praised Ravachol as Reclus did and that in a speech in London in 1893, insisting that all parties had recourse to violence when they lost confidence in other means and were brought to despair, he felt it necessary to declare: 'Of all the parties I now see only one party – the anarchist – which respects human life and loudly insists upon the abolition of capital punishment, prison torture and punishment of man by man altogether. All other parties teach each day the utter disrespect of human life.'[97]

By the late 1880s and early 1890s, being anxious about the isolation of the movement from the masses, which, particularly in France, had increased rather than diminished as a result of the preoccupation with *la reprise individuelle* and terrorism, Kropotkin saw the best possibility for popular revolution in the exploitation and development of the new militancy in the labour movement. In 1890 he declared, 'We must be with the people who no longer demand the isolated act, but men of action in its ranks.'[98] From now on he focussed his attention increasingly on the importance of revolutionary minorities working amongst the masses to develop the spirit of revolt.

He produced studies of the French Revolution to show how a sustained popular revolt developing from a proliferation of local revolts especially amongst the peasants, with the inspiration and help of revolutionary minorities, had enabled France to make a final break with the last vestiges of feudalism and produced a sort of popular communism which, though vague and incomplete, was more perceptive than modern socialism.[99] Developments in the Russian revolutionary movement, the progress of the social democrats on the one hand and the young anarchists who were narrowly preoccupied with the tactics of theft and diffuse, relentless terror, on the other (both of which in his view were ineffective because of the failure to take into account the lessons of the French revolution regarding the peasants) encouraged him to produce a major work on the subject, *The Great French Revol-*

ution (1909). All the more so after Nettlau in 1902 denigrated the role of the peasants, insisting in the over-riding importance of initiatives taken by revolutionary elites, bourgeois revolutionaries acting in advance and separately from the people.[100]

Kropotkin reiterated and developed his ideas about revolutionary minorities in 'Revolutionary Studies' (1891–92) and *L'Action anarchiste dans la révolution* (1914). Revolutions always begin, he argued, as the result of the appearance of men and women of initiative among the masses with the audacity to think and the energy to act to break with the past and set forth fearlessly into the unknown whilst others, still vague in their ideas of enfranchisement, were too timid to do so. If the actions of these revolutionary minorities truly responded to the vague aspirations of the people they would immediately be followed by others. Moreover, when the energy of the first revolutionists began to fail there would be thousands of imitators to carry on the work. Although men of initiative were rare in everyday life they arose in numbers during revolutionary epochs. It was the resolution and ferocious hard work of such revolutionists both before and during the revolution which would be necessary to carry through the immense task of construction required. The success of the revolution would depend, he now declared, on the boldness of thought and action developed amongst the masses not as a result of isolated dramatic acts but the systematic, hard work of more and more individuals in the midst of the people inspired by the anarchist ideal.

PART III

Kropotkin and the development of anarchist views of collective revolutionary action

9

Trade unionism and the emergent anarchist movement of the 1870s

Revolution by the spontaneous action of the masses was a central feature of European anarchist communism so that there was always some ambivalence towards the labour movement, which, for all its potentiality for mobilising the masses, often tended to be moderate in its aims and authoritarian in its organisation. The anarchists, however, though sharply critical of the labour movement, particularly during the 1880s when many became distrustful of any sort of formal organisation, generally speaking did not fail to appreciate the importance of working-class association in militant activity like strikes. Indeed, a sort of revolutionary syndicalism emerged from the bakuninism of the 1870s which even if it was somewhat eclipsed, even in Spain, by the preoccupation with action by individuals and small groups in the eighties, was to come into its own in the next decade.

Bakuninist ideas about trade unions seem to have developed from those expressed in the First International. Certainly Bakunin's discussion of the role of trade unions in the International, particularly in his articles for *L'Egalité* in 1869, would appear to contain at least in part an elaboration of the views expressed at the Congress of Brussels in 1868 and the Congress of Basle in 1869.[1]

The subject of trade union organisation and activity had been discussed in some detail at Brussels in 1868 in connection with the question of strikes.[2] De Paepe, reflecting what seems to have been the general view of the Congress, had expressed recognition of the strike as an instrument of struggle, not only to secure palliatives but also to foster amongst the workers that consciousness of their power in the production process which would encourage them to transform the economic system through workers' cooperatives. But he, like others, had been worried about the dangers of precipitate, ill-considered and inadequately organised strike action where there was no backing from

the strike funds and organisation of trade unions. Insisting on the importance of developing trade unions he had gone on to argue that, in order to be effective, they had to be able to help each other, and that this practical solidarity could only develop through the building up of an International Federation of unions. The unions thus organised would serve not only the needs of the present but the hopes of the future, for De Paepe had seen in them the embryonic form of the great free workers' companies counded on mutuality and justice which would one day replace the present oppressive capitalist organisations.

The question of trade unions itself had been discussed at the Congress of Basle in 1869. This time the report of the Commission, unanimously adopted by the Congress, had urged the importance of the development of trade union organisation from a series of federations at the local to the international level as the expression of working-class solidarity, which would enable labour gradually to secure the suppression of the wage system through the uniform reduction of working hours in the same trade, so as to establish equitable distribution of work and destruction of competition between workers. At the same time, the Congress, after the previous year's declaration in favour of a general strike against war, had also suggested the possibility of achieving a uniform level of wages through the generalisation of the struggle of each trade through supportive strikes by others.[3]

Even though the revolutionary implications are plain enough in terms of ultimate aims, all this, apart from the idea of some sort of general strike action, is suggestive of a fairly moderate and evolutionary, rather than a revolutionary approach. It is perhaps surprising, therefore, that the bakuninist approach should have apparently developed from such ideas. It is important to note, however, that at this stage circumstances narrowed the possibilities for effective action. The trade union movement on the continent, where large scale industrialisation had only just begun, was, unlike that in England, still only in the early stages of development. In a situation where the trade unions had secured some successes[4] and where, at least for the present, they were hardly strong enough to challenge authority by direct conflict, there was perhaps little real alternative to pacific and evolutionary methods if the movement was to survive and grow. In any case, for the most part, workers' organisations were still predominantly mutual aid societies.

In such a situation the combination of caution with radical ideals within the International is easy to understand. Remarkable instances of

trade union solidarity displayed towards each other by IWA members during some of the notable strikes of the period must have encouraged considerable optimism about the potentiality of trade unionism, and yet at the same time leading internationalists were painfully aware of the precariousness of forms of organisation which had only begun to develop comparatively recently.

Bakunin was undoubtedly influenced by all this. He too argued that trade union organisation and activity in the International were important in the building up of working-class power in the struggle against capital through the development of the solidarity of workers of all countries. 'Through association, they [the workers] will learn to help, to know and support one another, and [they] will end up by creating a more formidable force than that of all the bourgeois capital and political powers put together.'[5] He also declared that trade union based organisation of the International would not only guide the revolution but also provide the basis for the organisation of the society of the future.

> It will finally spread and be strongly organised across the frontiers of all countries, so that, when the revolution brought about by the pressure of reality, has broken out, there will be a real force aware of what it has to do and by the same token capable of taking hold of the revolution and giving it a direction truly beneficial for the people; a serious international organisation of workers' associations of all countries, capable of replacing the present political world of states and the bourgeoisie which is disappearing.[6]

Like other internationalists, he was worried about premature violent confrontations between labour and capital which would enable the bourgeoisie to crush the workers' movement. But he was first and foremost a revolutionist and was not impressed, as many internationalists were, by the example of British trade unions who nourished a belief that changes in the law and successful industrial action could effect the gradual transformation of the social and economic system. His warning against premature confrontation stemmed from his belief that a period of pacific development would give the workers time to build up an immense solid international organisation which would ultimately be too strong for the bourgeoisie to resist. 'A few more years of peaceful development,' he declared, 'and the International Association will become a power against which it will be ridiculous to try to fight. That is why they provoke us into struggle today.' In a letter of May 1872 to Morago, a leading internationalist in Spain, he wrote, 'The mission of the International is to unite the working masses, millions of workers,

cutting across the differences of nations and countries, across the frontiers of all States, so as to weld them into a single, immense and solid revolutionary body.'[7]

In fact, he saw the development of the International much more explicitly in terms of preparation for the revolution. Indeed he believed that trade unions had an essential part to play in developing the revolutionary capacities of the workers as well as building up the organisation of the masses for revolution. Trade unionism, he argued, would develop the 'revolutionary intelligence of the workers'.

What each worker demands in the depths of his heart – that is, a fully humane existence as regards material well-being and intellectual development, founded on justice, that is to say, on the equality and liberty of each and everyone in work – clearly cannot be realised in the present political and social world . . .

The germ of this socialist thought will be found in the instinct of every serious worker. The aim is therefore to make him fully aware of what he wants, to awaken in him a thought . . . corresponding to his instinct for, once the thought of the labouring masses has been raised to the level of their instinct they will be settled in their resolve and their power will become irresistible.

What is it that still prevents the most rapid development of this beneficial idea in the labouring masses? Their ignorance, and to a large extent political and religious prejudices . . . how can this ignorance be dissipated and these harmful prejudices destroyed? Will it be by instruction and propaganda?

These are undoubtedly very good and important instruments. But in the present state of the labouring masses they are insufficient. The isolated worker is too crushed by his work and his daily cares, to have much time to give to being instructed . . .

There remains, therefore, only one way, *that of his emancipation through practice.* What then can and must this practice consist of? There is only one form. It is *the organisation and Federation of resistance funds.*[8]

He maintained that the strike, though still a legal tactic, built up the capacity for struggle both by developing the revolutionary spirit of the masses against the exploiters and the practical solidarity between workers of every trade, locality and country in their opposition to the bourgeoisie.

And as for the strike, that is the beginning of the social war of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, this still within the limits of legality.

Strikes are a valuable instrument from two points of view. Firstly, they electrify the masses, reinvigorate their moral energy and awaken in them the feeling of the deep antagonism which exists between their interests and those of the bourgeoisie, always showing them the gulf that irrevocably separates them henceforward from this class; secondly they help immensely to provoke and establish between the workers of all trades, localities and countries, the consciousness and very fact of solidarity: a twofold action, both negative and entirely positive, which tends to

constitute directly the new world of the proletariat, opposing it almost in an absolute way to the bourgeois world.[9]

Moreover, in spite of urging caution against premature violent confrontations between labour and capital, he clearly believed and hoped that a proliferation of strikes associated with the development of workers' agitation within the organisation of the International would eventually culminate in a revolutionary general strike to transform the social and economic order. 'When strikes spread by contagion, it is because they are very close to becoming a general strike, and a general strike in view of the ideas of emancipation which now hold sway over the proletariat, can only lead to a cataclysm which would make society start a new life after shedding its old skin. No doubt we are not there yet, but everything is leading in that direction'.[10] And he did not think the cataclysm would arrive before the masses were sufficiently organised – the multiplication of strikes reinforced the development of workers' groups and the links between them.

But do the strikes follow each other so rapidly, that there is a fear that the cataclysm will occur before the proletariat is sufficiently organised? We do not believe it, for in the first place the strikes already show a certain collective strength, a certain understanding amongst the workers; furthermore, each strike becomes the starting point for new groupings. The necessities of the struggle impel the workers to extend support from one country to another and from one occupation to another; so the more the struggle becomes active, the more this federation of the proletariat must be extended and strengthened.

The Spanish Federation in the early years of its development adhered to a somewhat rigid and narrow interpretation of Bakunin's ideas about the organisation and activity of the International.[11] Concerned like Bakunin to build up the Federation as a powerful organisation both to carry through the revolution and provide the basic forms of the society of the future, the internationalists in a series of congresses between 1870 and 1873, created an elaborate system of local federations of trade unions established on an ostensibly decentralised basis, but crowned by a federal council with extensive powers and dominated by a few leading militants. Such a system was probably much less libertarian than Bakunin had intended, although it reflected both his preoccupation with strong revolutionary organisation and predilection for revolutionary vanguards. At the same time, the Spanish Internationalists in their anxiety to avoid a disastrous confrontation with capital, whilst they endeavoured to educate the workers and develop working-class solidarity, tended to discourage strike action. This

approach ensured strong support among the Catalan workers with their apolitical attitude and somewhat defensive rather than militant tactics, but it accorded less well with the revolutionary spirit of Bakunin, certainly where strikes were concerned. In fact, the peasants of Andalusia whose developing revolutionary consciousness had particularly struck Bakunin, were adopting a more radical syndicalist approach. In 1873, a series of militant strikes escalated into insurrectionary outbreaks against local councils, and during the period of cantonalist risings which followed the resignation of King Amadeo, the internationalists of Sanlucar de Barrameda temporarily took over the government of the city after the authorities made an attempt to outlaw the local section of the International.[12]

The immediate response of the Commission of the Spanish Federation to the cantonalist risings had been (somewhat unrealistically) to urge the workers to keep out of the struggles in order to prepare for revolution.[13] But some internationalists found it impossible to stand aside from such turmoil, and they too like the Andalusians became involved in revolutionary syndicalist action which actually went beyond the narrow bakuninist approach of the Commission. At Alcoy in Valencia they actually took over the city when police clashed with workers during a general strike. Internationalists at Barcelona led by Brousse and Viñas in June tried to take control of the city government but failed through lack of support – the Catalan workers did not share the revolutionary spirit of the workers at Alcoy or Sanlucar; in July they called a general strike which failed basically for the same reasons although on this occasion the authorities actually effectively thwarted the plan by drafting large sections of the population into the army to fight the carlists.

All this ended by discrediting revolutionary syndicalist tactics in the eyes of leading Spanish internationalists. According to Nettlau, Tomás, after his experience of the failure of the insurrectionary strike at Alcoy, declared that every isolated revolutionary movement was more prejudicial than useful for the future of the social revolution. 'It was the confirmed view of Tomás, that as regards strikes just as much as with revolutionary acts, *everything* should not be put at risk by partial, premature action.'[14] In an article in *La Solidarité Révolutionnaire* of Barcelona at the end of July 1873 in the wake of the abortive attempts at revolt, it was argued that whilst the trade union would become one of the important tools of the social revolution it could not organise effective revolutionary action through strikes – even where

that action was generalised.[15] At the Congress of the Anti-authoritarian International at Geneva in September Viñas bitterly denounced strikes. 'What has in my opinion,' he said, 'separated the *partis ouvriers* from the revolutionary movement, is the strike. Perhaps, in Spain, if the workers party had not been absorbed in so many strikes, it would have marched towards complete emancipation.'[16] Regarding proposals concerning the general strike, he argued that they effectively only involved a partial strike and he denied that the general strike was a revolutionary method in any case, for when the workers were ready for revolution they would not need the excuse of a general strike to mount the barricades.[17] In January 1874 a repressive military régime was established which inaugurated a new era of repression. The International survived as a clandestine organisation. In spite of internal divisions it struggled on to re-emerge in 1881, when as the Federación de los Trabajores de la Región Espagñola, it tried to re-establish the Spanish Federation on the same organisational principales as before.

Meanwhile in Switzerland, in contrast with the Spanish Federation, the bakuninists of the Jura were developing trade union ideas beyond those expressed by Bakunin. The labour movement in the Jura in the early 1870s proved itself an effective force in industrial relations. Because of the relatively flourishing state of the watch trade in a situation where there was a limited pool of specialised labour, the unions were able to be positively combative without involving themselves in a violent confrontation with the bourgeoisie. Successful strikes in 1869–70 and again in 1872–73 involved demands for higher wages, reduced working hours and generally better contracts for workers.[18] And it was in response to this relatively dynamic trade union movement that the bakuninists of the Jura Federation developed a sort of revolutionary syndicalism.

After the strikes of 1869 there had been a dramatic increase in the membership of the Federation and the trade unions which were not actually members of the International tended to be closely associated with it.[19] Although it is doubtful if the revolutionary aims of the leading internationalists were ever entirely shared by the rank-and-file unionists, militants like Schwitzguébel exercised a considerable influence on the development of an aggressive policy within the unions.[20]

The bakuninists at this stage, however, were still only reiterating the basic syndicalist ideas of Bakunin, and working out their application to a particular situation. The Manifesto addressed to the workers of the

valley of St-Imier (drawn up by Schwitzguébel for the Congress at La Chaux-de-Fonds in April 1870) appealed for a federal fund to finance *sociétés de résistance*, declaring that strikes even if unsuccessful could generally lead to 'a more solid organisation of the workers, which, from then on, would allow them to counterbalance the influences and demands of the employers [*patrons*] more effectively.'[21] He also insisted on the importance of working-class solidarity, which, he argued, could only be expressed and developed in an organisation of federations of workers' associations at both the regional and international level to defend the right of all workers; only through an organisation of this nature could the workers effectively fight the international aristocracy of capital, and he therefore urged them to apply themselves seriously to the task of establishing 'the universal federation of associated labour against monopoly capital.' The need for cooperation between the unions was stressed both at the federation's Congress at Sonvillier in 1871 and that at Le Locle in 1872, and led the Jurassians to attempt an agreement with the centralist German-speaking socialists at Olten in 1873. The first Congress of the Anti-authoritarian International at St-Imier expressed a similar view.

> We aim to organise resistance and make it stronger on a large scale. The strike is a valuable means of struggle for us, but we have no illusions about its economic results. We accept it as a product of the antagonism between labour and capital, having necessarily the result of making the workers more and more conscious of the gulf which exists between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, of strengthening the organisation of the workers, and of preparing the proletariat by the fact of purely economic struggles, for the great and definitive revolutionary struggle which, destroying all privileges and distinctions of class, will give the worker the right to enjoy the integral product of his labour, and thereby the means of developing in the community all his intellectual, material and moral strength.[22]

The Jurassians also envisaged a decentralised system of federations of trade unions (*corps de métiers*) as the basis of future society. The Sonvillier Circular of 1871 had declared, 'The future Society must not be anything other than the universalisation of the organisation that the International has given itself.'[23] Schwitzguébel seems to have expressed the same idea in a report to the federal committee at the Congress at Le Locle (1872).

> The Jura Federation . . . even before the revolution of 18 March, had adopted as a practical programme the free organisation of the workers themselves in free Communes, and the free federation of the Communes on an international basis . . .
>
> The only political problem which could seriously concern the workers is absolute decentralisation, not to the advantage of the Cantons, but to the advan-

tage of free Communes reconstituting the Federation from the bottom upwards, not by cantonal states, but by Communes.[24]

This is very evocative of the anarcho-syndicalism which developed in the 1890s, and indeed by 1873 ideas had begun to emerge both in the Jura and Belgian Federations which might be better described as revolutionary syndicalist than bakuninist. These were those of *direct action* and *general strike*.

Clearly the idea of the general strike as a revolutionary tactic was not new. As has already been noted, it had been suggested as a method of preventing war at the Congress of the International at Brussels in 1868, and had featured a year later in the discussions at the Congress of Basle when the Brussels delegate had suggested the possibility of establishing a uniform wage level through the generalisation of strike action of each group of workers in turn. According to Brécy there are indications that the idea of the general strike was being discussed among internationalists both in Paris and the Jura at this time.[25] The outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war and the defeat of the Commune, however, had tended to discredit the idea in the early 1870s. But it had re-emerged during 1873 among internationalists in Spain and Belgium. As we have seen, the attempt to develop the general strike as a revolutionary tactic proved fairly disastrous in Spain. In Belgium, on the other hand, the idea of the general strike emerged as a firm commitment from the congresses of the Belgian Federation in April and August 1873.

Belgium was the most industrialised country after England, but the condition of the workers there was much worse than that of their English counterparts.[26] This was particularly true of the heavily populated and highly industrialised regions of the Hainaut and Liège in Wallonia; and here desperation among the miners expressed itself in recurring spontaneous strikes.[27] The authorities responded with particularly savage military repression and the strikes of 1868–9 in the Charleroi and Borinage areas had been crushed by soldiers or police firing on strikers, killing some and wounding others.

The small Belgian section of the International centred on Brussels which had been mainly interested in universal suffrage, had not been involved in the early development of trade union activity, but now, in response to the treatment of the strikers of the Borinage and Charleroi, they had come out with a positive statement of solidarity with the miners and set about holding a large number of meetings and organising the workers within the IWA. They were particularly successful

among the engineering workers of the Centre where four unions combined to form the Union des Métiers de L'Industrie Mécanique du Centre, in 1871. The propaganda of the Brussels Internationalists, however, had enjoyed only a temporary success in the Hainaut and the IWA here does not really seem to have survived the disappointment of the fall of the Commune and the dissensions within the International.[28] On the other hand, the independent movement of '*les francs-ouvriers*' at Verviers which had affiliated to the IWA in 1868 was associated with a strong revolutionary spirit among the Verviétois, and its propaganda had had a more enduring success in the Liège region even though the groups in Liège itself do not seem to have been very active.[29] The Verviers section, which was bakuninist in its sympathies, had begun to play a leading role in the Belgian Federation with the mechanics at Verviers taking the initiative in the agitation for a shorter working day in 1871–72.[30] At the end of 1873, with the Brussels section reduced to about twenty to twenty-five members, the centre of activity moved to Verviers. In the same year, the Belgian Federation declared support for the Anti-authoritarian International.

Verviers was the centre of the woollen industry of the Verdre and the textile workers suffered more than any others from periods of prosperity alternating with periods of great misery. Perhaps this helps to explain the persistence of the revolutionary spirit of the Verviétois which contrasted with the pure desperation of the more consistently oppressed miners of Charleroi and the Borinage.[31] Certainly, in the face of a deteriorating economic situation in the wool industry at this time, the workers of Verviers became more frankly revolutionary. When the General Council of the Belgian Federation in 1873 proposed to raise funds to help relieve their misery, the Verviétois declared that the money would be better spent on preparing for the revolution.[32] In February the *Mirabeau*, arguing that the results of partial strikes were insignificant, declared its support for the idea of a general strike.[33] The question of the general strike was actually raised at the regional congress of the Belgian Federation in April. 'Flinck (Verviers) . . . says that the partial strike can only produce very few favourable results and that it would be a good thing to abandon it and enter into the organisation for a general strike, whilst of course considering this sort of strike from the point of view of propaganda and the Revolution.' Standaart of Brussels declared his enthusiastic support for this proposal. Other delegates agreed with Flinck, but seem to have been worried about the danger of failing to build up the popular support necessary for a

general strike by neglecting the articulation of particular grievances of the workers against the employers perhaps because of the Federation's dislike for partial strikes.[34] Nevertheless, a congress of the Federation held later that year (in August at Antwerp immediately prior to the general Congress of the Anti-authoritarian International at Geneva) pronounced in favour of the general strike.

In the Jura, Guillaume responded by expressing support for the Belgian proposal as expounded by Flinck and Standaart, although he recognised that some partial strikes were unavoidable and had doubts about the strength of the International to execute a general strike.

> The general strike, if it was realisable, would certainly be the most powerful lever of a social revolution. Just imagine the effect of the immense labour machine being stopped on a fixed day in all countries at once; no workers in any mine, in any factory, etc. . . . In a word, the whole people descending into the street, and saying to their masters: 'I will only start work again after having accomplished the transformation of property which must put the instruments of labour into the hands of the workers . . . '
>
> For our part, we share the opinion expressed by companions Flinck and Standaart: the immediate usefulness of the idea of a general strike will be that such an idea will cause partial strikes to be abandoned every time the absolute need for them has not been demonstrated. We will thus avoid the many disasters which do incalculable material and above all moral damage to the cause. As for knowing whether the International Federation of trade unions [*corps de métiers*] will ever be strong enough, solid enough, universal enough to be able to carry out a general strike . . . these are questions, to which no one today can give any answer, but which must not prevent us from zealously continuing our work of organisation.[35]

The Belgians raised the question of the general strike at the Congress of the Anti-authoritarian International at Geneva in September 1873. They urged the importance of the general strike as a tactic which could mobilise the workers for revolution: 'a means of bringing a movement onto the street and leading the workers to the barricades'.[36] A concept such as this clearly lacked the clarity of Guillaume's definition of the general strike in his report of the Belgian Congress in May and, in fact, the Belgians do seem to have been adopting a rather less uncompromising line than might have been expected, probably in order to placate opposition. Manquette (Vallée de Verdre), for instance, explained that in spite of Spanish and Italian claims that the general strike could not work in their countries, the Belgians had raised the issue because they believed that once a country was in revolt, whether as a result of a general strike or something else, other people should be ready to join forces with them. Verryken (Antwerp) for his part conceded that a

general strike in the absolute sense could not successfully be attempted.[37] At the same time, he urged that because there was now a tendency among all workers to strike, it was more constructive to encourage them to take revolutionary action through preparation for a general strike than to point out the pointlessness of partial strikes which would only alienate them from the International.

Two of the three delegates for the Jura Federation expressed support for the idea of a general strike. Guillaume saw in it a progression from the idea of the local struggle to that of the generalised struggle which would lead to revolution, and although recognising the necessity of some partial strikes, he insisted that attention should be focussed on the general strike.

> The International Workingmen's Association started with this idea of the partial strike. For the first time since its foundation something important has now happened, there is a vague desire for a generalisation of the strike. This idea proves that the International is setting out resolutely on the revolutionary path, since what it means by a general strike is the social Revolution. In the face of this we have to conclude that for the triumph of the revolution, this revolution will have to be general and no longer only local as it had been up to the present . . . We have to insist on this idea that the partial strike, every time it is not indispensable and imposed by questions of dignity as it were must be abandoned in order to think only now of the general strike, that is to say the social revolution.

But his view of what the general strike should be, seems to have changed since May – he now insisted that it should be spontaneous and contagious and not fixed for a particular day and hour.

> Is it essential that every movement breaking out amongst the workers should be simultaneous? Should the ideal of the general strike, given the meaning which is attached to these words, be that it has to break out everywhere at an appointed day and hour? Can the day and hour of the revolution be fixed in this way? No! We do not even need to bring up this question and suppose things could be like this. Such a supposition could lead to fatal mistakes. The revolution has to be contagious. It would be deplorable if one country did not start a revolution because it was waiting for help from others.

Spichiger also agreed about the importance of the general strike but thought it would be difficult to convince the workers of this, and insisted that socialists had to make the best of partial strikes without advocating them for fear of frightening off workers who still had faith in them. Other delegates, like Brousse and particularly Viñas, discouraged by the Spanish experience, were as we have seen much more critical.[38] The final resolution of the Congress on the issue was therefore noncommittal. Declaring that the first priority was to develop

trade union organisation, it set aside the question of the general strike on the grounds that it was the same thing as social revolution.

The interest of the Jurassians in the general strike was next expressed at their annual congress at La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1874 in the report of the district of Courtelary delivered by Schwitzguébel. The latter continued to recognise some value in strike action even when it was unsuccessful but shared Guillaume's anxieties about the problems and limitations of partial strikes and now insisted on the necessity of giving serious consideration to the question of the general strike as a way of achieving the social revolution.

> After the few real ameliorations which have been obtained by partial strikes, and in spite of the great sacrifices the workers have made, the idea of a general strike by the workers, which would put an end to the miseries they suffer, is beginning to be seriously discussed by workers' associations better organised than ours. It would certainly be a revolutionary act capable of producing a liquidation of the present social order and a reorganisation conforming to the socialist aspirations of the workers. We think that this idea should not be brushed aside as utopian, but on the contrary seriously studied by us too; and if we end up being convinced of the possibility of its realisation, we should agree with the workers' federations of every country on the means of action. Every palliative has been tried to free labour from the domination and exploitation of capital, the revolutionary way is the only one which remains open to us.[39]

Enthusiasm for the general strike was clearly tempered with a good deal of caution in the Jura. At the same time, there was a clear unwillingness to reject partial strikes. It is significant that Schwitzguébel's declaration occurred at the very end of what was in fact a fairly long and detailed discussion of strike tactics. The general strike did not feature in the resolutions of the congresses of the Jura Federation. In 1873 Engels had launched a bitter attack on the bakuninists for their involvement with the notion of the general strike, yet in practice the Jura like the Belgian Federation remained very much concerned with partial strikes.[40] This was associated with the development of the idea of *direct action*.

In 1874, the German-speaking socialists at their Congress at Winterthur in May, had resolved to agitate for the ten-hour day. Guillaume in the *Bulletin*, expressed support for the resolution on behalf of the Jurassians. 'This is an excellent thing, and we associate ourselves wholeheartedly with this movement.' But it is clear that the German-speaking socialists envisaged a political campaign for laws to impose a reduction of working hours and to this Guillaume opposed a policy of direct action – such as, in fact, had been adopted by the Belgian unions.

For us, the only course to adopt, is to force the employers, through the pressure exerted on them by workers' organisations, to grant the ten-hour day, in that way, the reduction of the working day will depend on the power of the workers' organisations, and our victory, when we have won it, will be the reward for our direct efforts: the workers will have worked for their emancipation themselves; and the organisation, thanks to which they have won the ten-hour day can then be used to complete their enfranchisement.[41]

This concept of direct action was developed in a further article on the subject in the *Bulletin*, 1 November 1874: 'In our view *it is for the workers themselves to limit the length of the working day*. If the workers seriously want it, they can, by the strength of their organisations in societies of resistance, alone, force the hand of the employers on this point, without the need of help from any State law.'[42] Guillaume went on to complain that German-speaking socialists in Switzerland, 'neglect what, in our eyes must be their constant concern, the single thought of their days and their nights: the creation and federation of trade associations [*sociétés de métiers*], directed at making war on capital.' Schwitzguébel reiterated this view in an article for the *Bulletin*, 28 February 1875.

Instead of begging the State for a law compelling employers to make them work only so many hours, the trade associations [*sociétés de métiers*] *directly impose* this reform on the employers [*patrons*]; in this way, instead of a legal text which remains a dead letter, a real economic change is effected *by the direct initiative of the workers* . . . if the workers devoted all their activity and energy to the organisation of their trades into societies of resistance, trade federations, local and regional; if, by meetings, lectures, study circles, papers and pamphlete, they kept up a permanent socialist and revolutionary agitation; if linking practice to theory, they *realised directly*, without any bourgeois and governmental intervention, all immediately possible reforms, reforms advantageous not to a few workers but to the labouring mass – certainly then the cause of labour would be better served than by this legal agitation advocated by the men of the *Arbeiterbund* and favoured by the Swiss radical party.[43]

And, in fact, a projected law for reducing the working day to eleven hours was greeted derisively in the *Bulletin* in April 1875.

Clearly the leading Jurassians saw the struggle against capitalism as a direct intensifying day-to-day combat between trade unions and employers possibly culminating in a general strike. They had more confidence and interest, however, in trade union activity and organisation than the Belgians whose advocacy of the general strike at this stage was associated with a decreasing confidence in the effectiveness of limited strike action.[44]

Meanwhile, the second half of the 1870s witnessed a drastic decline in proletarian support for both the Belgian and Jura federations. In Belgium, even at Verviers where the crisis in the woollen industry continued, support for the International fell away. Moreover, there were quarrels around the journal of the federation, *Le Mirabeau* during 1876 and 1877. It would seem, however, that the section still held regular meetings and even organised meetings for the unemployed at Verviers in January 1876. It associated itself, moreover, with the miners' strikes in the Hainaut and Liège areas 1875–76, even succeeding in re-establishing the section of the International at Liège.[45] But the trade union movement was now developing outside the International. The Fédération Ouvrière Gantoise and a similar organisation at Antwerp established in 1875 were strongly influenced by German socialism. The 'Chambre de Travail' established in Brussels in 1874 was clearly intended to replace the International, as Bertrand, one of its founders, frankly admits in his history, and whilst maintaining an anti-authoritarian position it adopted an essentially pragmatic approach, abandoning the vigorously intransigent anti-statism of the Verviétois and the Jurassians.[46]

The turning point for the bakuninist internationalists occurred at the Congress of the Belgian Federation in October 1876 at Antwerp, when the Bruxellois diecided to support the Gantois petition to Parliament against child labour in factories. The resolution was passed with even somewhat unwilling agreement from the delegate of the Vesdre.[47] But this was essentially still only the tentative beginning of a more parliamentary approach in Belgium. The Verviers section, some members of which campaigned vigorously against the petition – even publishing a hostile pamphlet soon after the Congress – remained essentially a force to be reckoned with because of its influence in Wallonia.[48] Great efforts were made to secure the agreement of the Verviétois at a meeting with the delegates of Antwerp in November – one of whom declared that if the Wallons would support the petition and Parliament rejected it, the Flemings would then unite with the Wallons to fight their common enemy *by force*: 'I ask you,' he went on, 'to make just one last effort, hand in hand, one last attempt before we definitely throw ourselves into violent methods.' But the bakuninists were not convinced, and the majority at the meeting refused to commit themselves either way, although a vote taken gave nominal support to the petition (twenty-seven votes for and four against).[49] The Jurassians were unimpressed by the attempts of socialists like de Paepe and Bertrand to justify the

change of tactic, Reclus commented ruefully: 'When you are committed to the path of petitioning, it is difficult to return to that of Revolution.'[50]

But the Verviétois seem so have felt the need of unity with other movements in the fight against capital and attempted to cooperate with the socialist worker organisations of Brussels and Flanders. The attempt was unsuccessful and the Parti Socialiste Belge (PSB) was finally founded in 1879 without them. The ascendancy of the PSB in the labour movement in Belgium seemed to be assured by the role it played in the strikes of that year which broke out in the wake of a mining disaster in the Borinage: the miners were persuaded to support a petition to Parliament on the question of safety in the mines and to reorganise their unions. But the decision of the PSB to press for universal suffrage and to present candidates at the 1880 elections brought it into direct conflict with the anarchists who, roused into action, quickly and effectively undermined the influence of the PSB in the Liège and Verviers areas.[51]

By 1880, the Anti-authoritarian International in Belgium was dead and the mainstream of the syndicalist movement was developing along vaguely social democratic lines but the anarchist influence emanating from Verviers remained a significant factor in the labour movement of Wallonia. The PSB had difficulty in establishing any firm influence at Verviers before the 1890s. In fact, there was a strong resurgence of the idea of the general strike among the miners of Wallonia in 1886.

The Jura Federation survived into the early 1880s, but unlike the Verviers section of the Belgian Federation it suffered a sustained loss of popular support and influence, in spite of its close association with the trade unions, whilst the syndicalist movement itself retreated into a purely defensive position as a result of the decline in the watch trade. Bakunin, as has already been noted, regarded the Jurassians as lacking revolutionary spirit in spite of the revolutionary syndicalist ideas emanating from the militants, and directed his attention to the more directly insurrectionist approach developing among the Italians in his last years. His reaction was not entirely unjustified as can be illustrated by the reaction of the Jura Federation to the Massacre of Göschenen in 1875.[52]

The Congress at Vevey which was in progress when news of the massacre was received, condemned the action, one delegate suggesting that the names of the members of the cantonal government responsible for the massacre should be publicly displayed to expose them to public

execration. Meetings of protest were held and a fund raised for the relief of dependants. The *Bulletin*, in response to bourgeois self-congratulation, declared: 'Ah! This is a good thing is it, messieurs the bourgeois? You find that you have to kill the workers to teach them how to live? So be it: we will remember that you were the first who called on the help of violence; and a day will come when we will say in turn to you: *This is a good thing*.'[53] The federation of engravers and engine-turners called for concerted action in the case of any further military attack on strikers, but nothing happened; when the military were brought in against strikers at Reigoldswyl (Basle) the workers took successful evasive action.[54]

The Italian Federation during the middle 1870s developed a more frankly insurrectionist approach which had little time for trade unionism. Costa recognised the excellence of the general strike as a revolutionary tactic at the Congress of Geneva in 1873 but insisted it was up to the different federations to decide for themselves about it. He firmly denounced partial strikes as a diversionary activity: 'the general strike is an excellent revolutionary method . . . Partial strikes have only been dust thrown into the eyes of the workers.'[55] Exchanges between Malatesta and Guillaume at the Congress of the Anti-authoritarian International at Berne in 1876 underlined the tension between the Italians and the Jurassians.[56] 'In Italy,' Malatesta declared, 'it is not by trade-unionism [in English in the text] that we can ever obtain any serious result; economic conditions in Italy and the temperament of the Italian workers are opposed to it.' He went on to declare that trade unions 'are in my eyes a reactionary institution'. Guillaume disagreed with this condemnation.

> It is not the institution of trade unions [in English in the text] taken in itself which is reactionary, since this is no other than the establishment of the solidarity of the interests of the workers of the same occupation, and is an economic, natural and necessary fact; it is primarily on the basis of workers' corporations born of the development of modern industry that a society of freed labour must one day be built. What is true and what Malatesta probably meant is that the spirit of a very large number of workers in the trade union is still a reactionary one.

But some militants were now involved in the Jura Federation who were directly revolutionary in their approach. Albarracin, the leader of the revolt at Alcoy, had fled to Switzerland in 1874, and was corresponding secretary for the Federation from 1876 until his return to Spain in June 1877. Elisée Reclus, who was always cool towards syndicalist tactics, had begun to play an active role in the Federation in the late

seventies. Costa, the Italian revolutionary, was addressing meetings in the Jura in 1877. More significantly, however, Paul Brousse had emerged as an important figure in the Jura Federation. As we have seen the development of a thriving section, both French and German-speaking, at Berne between 1874 and 1876 was largely the result of his energy and enterprise. But he was not sympathetic to syndicalist tactics, even though the Berne section had attracted public attention by its support for a local printers' strike for higher wages in 1875. During 1872 and 1873 he was already beginning to think in terms of revolutionary acts as well as more aggressive oral and written propaganda as the way of educating the workers towards revolution. In the Jura he established the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, and later *L'Avant-Garde* in which the propaganda was much more inflammatory than that of the *Bulletin*. His advocacy of revolutionary acts finally came into conflict with the more circumspect approach of Guillaume in 1877 over the Berne demonstration a few months after Kropotkin's arrival in the Jura.

10

Kropotkin and collective action in the labour movement

Early hostility to trade unions: his denunciation of British trade unionism

It would seem that Kropotkin had been enthusiastic in his initial reaction to the syndicalist ideas of the Anti-authoritarian International. He first visited the bakuninists of the Jura and Verviers in 1872, at a time when both the Belgian and Swiss federations had been associated with successful strike action. He was profoundly impressed by the trade union solidarity achieved and the 'revolutionary character of the agitation of the workers' in the Jura. He declared that 'the great mass and the best elements of the Belgian coalminers and weavers had been brought into the International', and described the clothiers of Verviers as 'one of the most sympathetic populations that I have ever met in Western Europe'.[1]

But his enthusiasm for the workers of Verviers and the Jura did not lead him to adopt the syndicalist views of the bakuninists. Indeed, he began with a fairly negative approach. This comes out quite clearly in his discussions of trade union organisation and activity in the manifesto he prepared for the Chaikovsky Circle in 1873.[2]

In this document, he urged the identification of the revolutionary with any local disturbances with a limited aim (e.g. a demonstration against a foreman or manager at a factory, a demonstration against some restraining measure, a disturbance in a village with the aim of removing the foremen, the clerks, the middlemen, and so on) because they provided an opportunity for developing a more general opposition to oppression among the masses. But he warned against the initiating of such disturbances where the resultant repression could deprive the movement of its best men:

It is necessary to remember, besides, that all the governments of the West, ours as well, will not hesitate to adopt the same programme, namely, always trying to provoke these local disturbances in order to seize the better people, to tear them from their places, or shoot them and plant terror among the populace.

So far his views were essentially bakuninist, but his discussion of the question of strikes which followed reveals a very critical approach to trade unionism.

He described the strike as a weapon developed in Western Europe over a long period by trade unions, to secure partial improvement in the daily life of the worker. However, the situation was changing:

Now new ideals, new goals, new aspirations are appearing among the workers. The problem of the labour question has already become not the partial improvement of daily life, but the question of the transfer of the instruments of labour to the workers themselves.

In Russia, where there had been no tradition of trade union organisation and activity, he was opposed to any attempt at establishing a trade union type of organisation which would put a secondary goal of partial improvement in the forefront of its activity rather than the ultimate goal of social change. It would take too long for trade union organisation to acquire both the experience and funds necessary for strike action which could be effective in securing short term aims; and he cited the example of socialists in Western Europe whose experiences had shown that 'the strike serves as a good method for arousing the consciousness of one's power only when it ends in victory'. Moreover, people attracted to the movement by its short term aims, being unconvinced of the necessity for social change, would obstruct the struggle to obtain it.

He does not seem to have seen much value in the strike as providing an opportunity for making social propaganda. 'It is necessary to remark that there is always an opportunity for criticism of the mode of daily life, and the strike is not the most opportune.' Neither did he regard it as a constructive factor in the development of working-class solidarity.

As to consciousness [of solidarity] of unity, of community, which mutual assistance during strikes so promotes, we think that the same consciousness is achieved in the same degree by the constant intercourse of the groups which are indispensable for an organisation; and the more lively and intimate the intercourse, the more homogeneous their composition. An extensive organisation for the sake of strikes does not at all assist this last condition but rather hinders it by introducing

the extreme heterogeneity of agitational training into the structure of circles necessary for these goals.

He did, however, recognise the educational value in the strike.

Any strike trains the participants for a common management of affairs, for the distribution of responsibilities, distinguishes the people most talented and devoted to a common cause, and finally forces the others to get to know these people and strengthen their influence.

And it was on these grounds he advised that populist activists should take part in strikes. They should not provoke them, however, because of 'all their terrible consequences for the workers in case of failure (deprivations, hunger, the spending of the last meagre savings)'.

Obviously Kropotkin's views here have to be considered as they were intended primarily as a response to the Russian situation. Industrial development had only just begun in major cities in Russia, and even though it proceeded rapidly in the 1870s, certainly in St Petersburg, the increase in labour disturbances and strikes was not associated at first with any sort of organised trade union movement such as had begun to emerge in Western Europe. Early in 1873, very soon after a very large strike at the Krengol'm textile factory in August–September 1872, the chaikovskists decided to give priority to activity amongst the city workers. Anxious about the departure of the best workers to the countryside in the summer of 1872 they had put a new emphasis on the need to give the workers some concrete short-term objectives such as better pay and conditions, shorter hours and so on, so that they also would not despair and leave the city. Attempts were made to strengthen workers' organisation by combining all the individual groups. But doubts about the workers' capacity for organisation were growing: at a meeting in early November 1873, the chaikovskists had declared somewhat ruefully that even the best of Russian workers were not ready to be organised in a serious way. Quite clearly Kropotkin believed that experience had shown that they had been mistaken in directing their attention towards developing some sort of trade unionism – he feared that such activity tended to divert attention and resources to the unsuccessful pursuit of limited aims, without contributing very much to the development of the revolutionary struggle at a time when the movement was too fragile to sustain such diversionary agitation. Zelnik has suggested that the Krengol'm strike, which was the largest single incident of sustained labour unrest in the entire decade, may have influenced Kropotkin in making such a

point of discussing the strike question in his manifesto, because it was just the sort of strike he regarded as diversionary. Certainly, it seems likely that he knew quite a lot about it and may have had some intimate knowledge of the affair from contact with one of the leaders, Villem Pressman who, in late 1873 and early 1874 was a member of Kropotkin's workers' circle in the Vyborg district.[3]

This argument, specific though it was to the Russian situation, betrays nonetheless an underlying hostility to trade unionism – a hostility expressed in the sharp criticism of the limited aims of strikes, the insistence on the disastrous effects of their failure, the questioning of their value in developing working-class solidarity and agitational skills. Such hostility was at variance with the approach of the Jurassians as well as with that of Bakunin. Even though he feared any premature confrontation between labour and capital, Bakunin attached a high priority to trade unionist agitation, seeing strikes as a way of developing the workers' struggle against the employers. Schwitzguébel in his manifesto to the workers of St-Imier in 1870 had argued particularly strongly about the importance of trade union agitation in developing working-class action and solidarity in the fight against capital – he had even maintained that, although ineffective strike action should be avoided, it did nonetheless develop working-class solidarity. During his visit to the Jura in 1872, Kropotkin had met and been impressed by Schwitzguébel; it is possible he may even have read the latter's manifesto.[4] His comment that the trade union movement in Western Europe had begun to transcend the limited vision usually associated with a preoccupation with limited objectives suggests that he was aware of the Jura Federation's sympathetic attitude to the labour movement and to a limited extent supported it. But the support is grudging, and quite clearly Kropotkin did not agree with the conclusions in Schwitzguébel's manifesto. Significantly even when he conceded that strikes had some educational value, it was in a narrow, almost elitist sense evocative rather of the Secret Alliance than the International. Perhaps this again is understandable since Kropotkin was addressing himself in this document, exclusively to a movement which, by force of circumstances, could only develop as an underground organisation. Be that as it may, his general approach to trade union activity does seem to have been more hostile than his commitment to bakuninism suggested he should have been.

Kropotkin's association with the Chaikovsky Circle ended with his arrest and imprisonment in 1874. He only wrote again about trade

unionism after he had escaped from Russia to England. The articles were about the British movement which had entered a period of retrenchment as a result of the economic depression in which trade unionists had sustained a series of defeats. Kropotkin was highly critical of this retrenchment, particularly of the involvement with parliamentary politics associated with it. The parliamentary committee, created by the TUC in 1871 to pressure parliament, was focussing its lobbying under the secretaryship of Henry Broadhurst, a fervent liberal, on securing very limited legislation to defend trade union interests. When in September 1876 the Council of Trade Unions produced an address to the government about the Bulgarian atrocities in the wake of Gladstone's campaign on the issue, Kropotkin denounced it. Such an address he insisted (with some justification) illustrated how the reaction of British workers had been exploited in the interest of party politics by the liberals and the bourgeois press with the help of working-class representatives.[5] In October Kropotkin sent a hostile report on the annual trade union congress to the *Bulletin*. It was short and sharp – such an event did not merit a report he declared: trade union officialdom was on good terms with the government and both sides were 'skilful in moderating untimely demands and giving the march of progress that slowness they judge useful to their security'; and on the dozen occasions when the parliamentary committee of Congress would visit a minister, they would 'exchange compliments with each other on their good manners and separate mutually enchanted.'[6]

In the spring of 1877, Kropotkin made another bitter attack on English trade unionism. This was associated with a visit to Verviers he had made at the beginning of the year to sound out the prospects for reviving the revolutionary movement in the Belgian Federation in the face of growing support for the parliamentary tendency. Brousse, it seems, planned to go and work in Belgium. Guillaume had therefore asked Kropotkin to visit his friends there to see if anything could be done to counteract the influence of the socialists of Brussels and Flanders, and, in particular, to resolve the quarrels over the *Mirabeau*, the revolutionary newspaper of the Verviers section, which had fallen under the control of a moderate called Sellier.[7]

Kropotkin, like the Jurassians, had no sympathy with aspirations for unity in the Belgian socialist movement which, as we have seen, inspired the move towards parliamentarism in Wallonia, and he had been glad to report in a letter to Robin in early February that the more he got to know the people the more he realised how illusory parlia-

mentary agitation was in Verviers.[8] Sellier, in the *Mirabeau*, and the deputies from Ghent and Antwerp had certainly elicited some support for the approach of the Flemish socialists, imbuing them with enthusiasm for the virtues of the parliamentary approach of English trade unions.

There are some workers who keep saying: but just look at the fine English trade unions [trade unions in English in text]. 'See what strength they have acquired. Union is strength. You will see, yes you will see that England will still be the first to resolve the social question, not by violent methods, but by demanding and promulgating what the workers' party wants, when it is the strongest party.' This is what has been preached to them and what these parrots keep saying.

But the majority, Kropotkin claimed, did not follow this line and the workers listened attentively when he explained the true nature of English trade unions: 'A defender of *trade unions* [trade unions in English in text] appeared, well, you should have seen how the audience . . . devoured me with their eyes when I started to ask them if they had been told so much about *trade unions*, if they had been told about the *spirit* that animates them, the organisation, the indispensable power of presidents, secretaries, etc., etc. They had insisted that they were not going to follow the parliamentary path – they said: never! They had not thought of it, and no one had proposed it.' They had excused their failure to oppose the Gantois petition by insisting that the request to support it did not mean they had been asked to declare for parliamentarism. Indeed, there had been no real enthusiasm for the petition and the Verviétois had even added a demand to ensure its refusal. His suggestion that it would be the first step to wasting time with universal suffrage and parliamentary candidatures had been greeted with a storm of protest. Kropotkin had therefore concluded that since the parliamentary current had not taken as firm a hold in the valley of the Verdre as it had done in Flanders, there was hope of reviving the local revolutionary movement if the influential *Mirabeau* could be wrested from the control of the Flemish section of the Federation.[9] He thought Brousse could do this with the help of Fluse, the most influential, eloquent and energetic member of the movement at Verviers who was sympathetic to the anarchists. But in a letter at the end of the month in response to queries from Robin as to what progress had been made in the Belgian Federation, Kropotkin had expressed less optimism about the possibilities, confiding to his friend his doubts about the capacity of the revolutionary element to make much impact where the rank and file, if excellent in their principles, were so passive. On the eve of his

departure from Verviers Kropotkin had told Robin he had been present at a meeting between the friends of Fluse and the old internationalists who had left the International because of the internal squabbles. A resolution had been agreed at this meeting whereby the participants undertook to take an active part in agitation, but this had lacked conviction – in effect Kropotkin complained it had only been a muddled speech from Flinck which might result in Fluse and his friends retaking the *Mirabeau* after six months if the influence of Brussels did not increase.[10]

The Jurassians had decided, in the light of Kropotkin's report, that little or nothing could be done to help the Belgians particularly as Brousse,, the only person likely to achieve anything, could not be spared. Kropotkin however had continued his efforts to counteract parliamentary propaganda in the Verviers section of the Belgian Federation – particularly on the question of trade unionism. In a letter written on his arrival at Neuchâtel he had asked for copies of the *Beehive* for 1876 because Guillaume had urged him to do a series of articles on trade unionism to submit to the *Mirabeau*.[11] He seems to have broached the idea with Fluse but there had been no immediate reaction: 'They are probably asking permission from Brussels,' he had remarked caustically to Robin at the end of February.[12] Two weeks later however he was reporting that the *Mirabeau* wanted articles on trade unionism and he had requested advice on reading up the subject, adding 'This would not be to repeat history, but to take up the arguments against it.'[13] Finally in April he had sent a report on English trade unions originally intended for the *Bulletin* to the *Mirabeau* as a sort of pilot piece.[14] It appeared at the end of April 1877.

Essentially this article was a denunciation of the English Trade Union Movement for collusion with the capitalist system through a preoccupation with compromises and diversionary objectives. A working-class MP, Macdonald, at a miners' meeting in Glasgow, had apparently suggested the emigration of some 20,000 young workers as the only solution to the problem of falling wage levels, and Kropotkin reported indignantly that the English working class had actually supported this suggestion:

And does not the English working class, so well organised in trade unions (*corps de métiers*), rebel against such an order of things? Do not the marvellous, powerful *trade unions* [trade unions in English in text] raise their manly voices to denounce the causes of this state of affairs? Do they not get angry at these words which drive 20,000 young and strong workers from their native land. No – they applaud the

fine words of Mr Macdonald. They are now preaching workers' candidatures to remedy the evil. They are preaching conciliation with the employers, an alliance with the clergy; arbitration on questions of wages (*always* to reduce them, without useless strikes), a sliding scale of wages regulated by mutual agreement with the employers – these are the salutary methods they recommend. Finally they are preaching large scale emigration as well . . . [15]

Kropotkin did not believe they ever seriously considered the real causes of poverty and unemployment. 'But do you think these fine, powerful English workers' associations ask such questions? Do they ever go to the root of any question whatever? . . . Oh no! Do the leaders of the trade unions ever say anything which seems so close to what the utopian Socialists said?' That very week, the 'practically minded' union leaders had busied themselves with discussing the question of international arbitration as a means of avoiding wars, without even mentioning the commercial rivalries and exploitation which inspired them. And they had ended up naïvely calling for a code of International Law as the only way to avoid numerous quarrels when every day their newspapers were full of evidence that the law in itself perpetuated the oppression of the poor by the rich and the weak by the strong. Kropotkin argued that no member of the International could have applauded such leaders as these English trade unionists had done. 'Any worker who had belonged to the International be it only for a year or two, would have immediately seen through them and called them either hypocrites or idiots.'

Kropotkin did go on to produce a series of articles on trade unionism, but these appeared in the *Bulletin* not the *Mirabeau* for which they were probably originally intended. Certainly the relationship between the two papers which had previously been strained, improved during the summer of 1877 – probably as a result of Kropotkin's efforts, utilising his friendship with Fluse to smooth over misunderstandings and to strengthen resistance to the parliamentary tendency among the Verviétois.[16] It was clearly due to Kropotkin's intervention that the *Mirabeau* published letters from Costa in the summer of 1877 which successfully thwarted the attempt of Malon to discredit the Italians in the eyes of the Verviétois over the Benevento affair.[17] But in April the influence of Sellier was still strong.[18] Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, the Wallons were in the difficult position of trying to reach an acceptable compromise on the question of political action with the movement in Flanders and Brussels in the cause of unity – something about which the Jurassians had grave mis-

givings. It seems possible that the Verviétois found Kropotkin's approach too abrasive and uncompromising in this situation.[19]

Meanwhile if Kropotkin was depressed about English trade unionism and its effect on the revolutionary consciousness of workers both in England and Belgium, he was by no means reassured by the situation in the Jura Federation. In a letter to Robin at the end of February he had complained that the poorest workers who were sympathetic to the socialists were afraid to support them because of the fear of unemployment, declaring that only something dramatic like gunfire or a strike could provoke them into any sort of action.[20] All this suggests he had little faith either in the workers or the trade unions in the Jura. At the same time he was discouraged by the lack of a dynamic approach in response to the situation among the Internationalists themselves, and, fired by Brousse's enthusiasm, he directed his attention to the French movement, involving himself in the setting up of *L'Avant-Garde* and efforts to revive the French Federation.

In the August of 1877, he attended the secret Congress of the French Federation at La Chaux-de-Fonds which, under Brousse's inspiration, had expanded to twelve sections from the original three represented at the Congress of the Anti-authoritarian International at Berne in 1876. One of the resolutions of the Congress of the French Federation related to strikes: 'In the case of strikes breaking out in countries where the French sections have an influence, these sections must take advantage of the event to give the strike a socialist revolutionary character by urging strikers to abolish their situation as wage earners through taking possession of the instruments of labour by brute force'.[21] This view was elaborated in an article a few weeks later in *L'Avant-Garde*:

> We declare ourselves enemies of the trade unions [*corps de métiers*] that are trying to be a palliative that are claiming to ameliorate the present situation of the worker and in reality are only delaying him on the road which must lead to his complete emancipation. We are, if you like, in favour of the trade union [*corps de métier*] which is preparing to bring about a new order of things, and opposed to the one which restricts itself to trying to bring about ameliorations, and which exists by accommodating itself to them.[22]

Although there is none of the outright rejection of trade unionism here which the Italians expressed at the Congress of Berne, the French International was adopting an uncompromising attitude to trade unionism quite at odds with the more cautious approach of the Jurassians.

Kropotkin's close association with such ideas is very evident in his discussions of trade unionism, in a series of articles which appeared

between May and July 1877, where he insisted on the necessity for an organisation of workers using revolutionary methods and imbued with revolutionary aims.

His first articles appeared in the *Bulletin* from the end of May until the middle of July.[23] His principal preoccupation was to combat the parliamentary socialism which he believed emanated from Germany; his recent experiences in England, Belgium and German-speaking Switzerland had led him to fear that the trade union movements of the continent would develop along the lines of British trade unionism, which at this time had become closely associated with parliamentarism. He began by reiterating his earlier contention that English trade unionists had allowed themselves to get involved in parliamentary politics on behalf of bourgeois interests and did not concern themselves in any way with questions related to socialism.

> *They* [trade unions] *respect individual property* and take up its defence. They are not concerned with the abolition of the body of employers [*patronat*] and the capitalist mode of production. They accept the order of things as it exists today and concern themselves only with ameliorating the situation of the unionists, *without worrying in the least* about the social reorganisation, which has become the vital question for workers on the continent.[24]

Certainly they seemed to constitute a large and powerful movement, but could such a type of organisation be recommended to the workers as one which could free labour from the capitalist yoke? He then went on to explain why it could not.

Contemporary English trade unionism had emerged out of the struggles of many centuries during which its development had been associated with that of political liberties and representative government. The trade unions began to consolidate themselves as a movement at a time when the social question had not yet been posed, and they had made their greatest impact in struggles to secure short-term ameliorations of the workers' condition. Such a movement depended for its effectiveness on working within the limitations of the bourgeois state and had no revolutionary potentiality.

> An organisation which is concerned with nothing but hours of work and wages without ever asking if it would not be better to abolish the wage system and individual property completely, an organisation of this sort, which was still possible sixty years ago, has not become an impossibility for workers on the continent. The worker no longer simply asks himself if he will work 9 or 10 hours for his employer [*patron*], or will be paid 2 or 3 francs – he also asks himself if he will work for himself or for the paunch of the property owner, if he has the right to the product of

his labour or if the employer [*patron*] should take the lion's share. It is absolutely impossible . . . to confine the ideas of the working mass within the narrow circle of reductions in working hours and wage increases, now the question has arisen amongst them. The social question compels attention, the workers' organisation propels itself either into the sterile path of parliamentary politics as in Germany, or into the path of revolution as in France.[25]

In a further article on English trade unionism in July, he declared that the political liberties secured by trade unions were overrated, for the workers were still oppressed, and not even universal suffrage (as the French workers have found out) would change this. The English people could only free themselves by revolution. As for the rights of association and strike action which had been won – the victory had not been secured by the trade unions of today which based themselves essentially on legal methods.

Very well! The English people acquired all these liberties through associations which placed themselves on the *ground of illegality*. It was by organising themselves into workers' societies when they were strictly forbidden. It was by organising their secret societies (up to 1824). It was by taking strike action, when you could be hung for it or shut up for years and years in prison. It was by using the *knife, sulphuric acid and gunpowder* against their enemies, by sending its best elements to the gibbet and executioner for putschs that the English people won *all* its liberties. And it would be either ignorant or jesuitical to distort history to the point of not saying to the worker IT WAS AS A RESULT OF PERSEVERING *in breaking the law*, by violence, innumerable attentats against individuals – in brief, BY ACTION ON THE GROUND OF ILLEGALITY that the English people won the freedom to strike and to combine . . .[26]

In effect Kropotkin was asserting that a syndicalist movement could only fight capitalist oppression successfully by being a purely revolutionary organisation. Such a view of syndicalism was quite different from that of the first International which envisaged the building up of an immense association of workers in trade unions which, avoiding a premature confrontation with capital, would eventually be strong enough to overthrow capitalist oppression. His view was perhaps closer to that of Bakunin; but Kropotkin does not seem to have shared Bakunin's conviction that the revolutionary ideas of the people could be developed by trade union activity. The only similarity between Kropotkin's 'revolutionary' syndicalism and that of the Jurassians or even the Verviétois was its anti-parliamentarianism and its insistence on the importance of revolutionary aims. As we have seen the leading Jurassians refused to disparage all the short-term aims of trade unions, and if they advocated direct action and even the general strike,

preferred legal to illegal action; at the same time even though the Verviétois in proposing the general strike in 1874 had denounced partial strikes and had urged the movement to concentrate instead on organising for revolution, the Belgian Federation had been unwilling to abandon legal for illegal action. It could be argued that Kropotkin was effectively adopting an anti-syndicalist position, since no trade union could be expected to base itself on a total rejection of legal action and short-term aims. But the object of his hostility was basically contemporary English trade unionism rather than syndicalism in general.

The Pittsburg strikes in the United States and the revival of the Labour Movement in England and France

It is clear from his articles of August 1877 about the railway strikes in Baltimore USA that he was not hostile to strikes or even trade unionists in some circumstances.[27] A reduction in the wages of drivers had led to a strike of railway workers in which the strikers had attacked the property of their employers. The militia was called in and crushed the strike, but, within two days, further widespread strikes of railway workers had paralysed the railways. Moreover, workers in other trades had begun to come out on strike in sympathy with the railway men. Kropotkin, in his report, maintained that in many places the strikes had developed into a violent struggle of the people against their oppressors. But the general uprising expected by a fearful bourgeoisie did not take place and the strikers gave in.[28]

Kropotkin declared that he was not surprised at this defeat because justice could not be achieved by a single insurrection. Indeed, he was impressed by the revolutionary character of the strikes.

> This movement will certainly have profoundly impressed the European proletariat and excited its admiration. Its spontaneity, simultaneity, at so many distant points communicating only by telegraph, the help supplied by the workers of different trades, the resolute character of the uprising from the beginning, the happy idea of striking the property owners on their most sensitive spot, their property – attracts all our sympathy, excites our admiration and awakens our hopes.[29]

Evidently, for Kropotkin, these strikes had all the characteristics of the sort of spontaneous popular revolt he hoped and looked for. He declared however, that the movement had lacked one essential – a declaration of principle. Such an insurrection, and a shedding of blood, was not provoked simply by a 10 per cent cut in wages: it was inspired by 'hatred of the employers [*patrons*] and the present ignoble order,

aspirations, perhaps vague, but always just, for a social revolution, and for a new order of things.' But there had been no explicit formulation of these aspirations, which Kropotkin believed to exist among the proletarians of America just as they did among their European brothers. Why was this? 'It is because – let us note it well – the American trades organisations, the trade unions [trade unions in English in text] – for clearly it is they who prepared the strike and the insurrection – *do not express all the aspirations of the people*. In confining themselves to the exclusive field of wage questions they are no longer the representatives of the main aspirations for the fundamental reorganisation of society through social revolution which are already penetrating the mass of the people.' Unfortunately the propagation of socialist ideals had been left to the American Labor Party which had committed itself to parliamentary instead of revolutionary tactics. All this had prevented the American movement from achieving all that it could have achieved.

> Thus we have on the one hand the organisation for revolutionary action which does not broadly pose the principles of socialism; and on the other the principle, without revolutionary *action* and with an organisation calculated to stop every affirmation of the revolutionary act: such are the causes which have prevented the American movement bearing fruit as much as it could have done. If the American workers' organisation had been a synthesis of the two present organisations: the principle, together *with* the revolutionary organisation for realising as much of their principle as possible every time the opportunity presents itself.[30]

In this article, Kropotkin displayed a much more sympathetic attitude to trade unionism in America than he had shown for English trade unionism. In spite of the lack of defined socialist aims the American movement had involved itself in revolutionary not parliamentary action. And he actually expressed the hope that the American strikes would convince the European proletariat of the futility of parliamentarism and the need to abandon the narrow preoccupation with the question of wages, so characteristic of English trade unionism, even suggesting that the English proletariat would soon follow the example of their American brothers. It would seem that in 1877, Kropotkin, much as he feared the trade union tendency to adopt parliamentary tactics in the pursuit of limited aims, was not fundamentally anti-unionist as his earlier articles had suggested. This comes out very clearly if we compare Kropotkin's reaction to the Pittsburg strikes with that of Elisée Reclus, who was always profoundly sceptical of the revolutionary potential of trade unionism.

Unlike Kropotkin, Reclus was bitterly disappointed that the strikes had not turned into an insurrection. He was much less confident about the developing revolutionary consciousness of either the strikers or the trade union movement and less optimistic about the impact of the strikes on the development of the revolutionary movement.

> But it has to be said, the timorous in Europe have soon been reassured and the reality has not corresponded to our sudden hope. The strike of the American workers has not been a revolution; it has not even been a partial one and the great mass of the workers has remained separated from the movement. After twelve emotional days affairs seem to have taken up their accustomed course again: the slave has given his limbs up to the shackle again and the god capital has recovered all his serenity.[31]

He maintained that there had been no general class conspiracy, indeed many workers did not join the strike and the most powerful union (the United Engineers) had contented itself with issuing threats instead of providing men and money to influence the outcome directly. He was not encouraged as Kropotkin had been by the violent attack on bourgeois property, and does not seem to have shared Kropotkin's belief that the strikers were thereby expressing revolutionary aspirations even if those aspirations had not yet been formulated into a definite aim by the unions. Reclus, making no distinction between the unions and the workers themselves, maintained that the appeals of the strikers, in concentrating as they did on the question of wages and not property, showed that the workers had still not arrived at a consciousness of their rights. He argued that had they gone on to take over and run the railways for the benefit of all even for a short while they would have secured more general working-class support and given the masses that appreciation of the difference between public service and capitalist exploitation which would have rendered popular expropriation of the railway companies, sooner or later, inevitable. As it was, the workers, in the wake of defeat, now turned to parliamentary tactics and under the influence of German ideas dreamed of establishing a workers' state. Although he recognised the importance of the growth of the American Labor Party in marking a definitive political schism between the exploiter and the exploited he hoped that the American workers would soon realise that the vote was just as useless as the strike.

Kropotkin's approach to trade unionism, fiercely critical though it may have been, was much more positive than that of Reclus. Convinced, particularly after the Pittsburg strikes, that it could be a revolutionary movement, his main concern seems to have been to oppose the

tendency towards parliamentarism. This impression is borne out by his approach to developments in France. With the fall of the reactionary MacMahon régime in the wake of the crisis of the Seize Mai, in 1877, France seemed to be entering a less reactionary period which would provide an environment more favourable to the development of the labour movement.

The first national congress of labour organisations, unions, cooperatives and mutual aid societies met in Paris in 1876. It had been very moderate in its demands and had urged the peaceful resolution of industrial questions without recourse to strikes. But in spite of its tame beginnings, Kropotkin and his friends believed that the French labour movement could be developed along revolutionary socialist lines. At this stage, they were already anxious about the guesdists. Writing to Robin after a two day visit to Paris in July 1877, he had declared, 'More than ever I have come to the conclusion that one of our people must be in Paris to neutralise the influence of people like Guesde.'[32] By November Guesde had provoked outright hostility from the *Bulletin* by urging the workers to vote.[33] But when early in 1878 Kropotkin had joined Costa in Paris, the anarchists worked together with Guesde and his friends to establish the first socialist groups and to make some impact on the Labour Congress held at Lyon in January that year.

Socialist groups were not allowed representation at the Congress. But Balivet, a member of the International, managed to secure a place as delegate for the mechanics of Lyon. Along with Dupire, an associate of Guesde in Paris, he called for a commitment to collectivism. At the same time he also urged an anti-statist approach and the rejection of parliamentary representation for the workers. He seems to have been acting, in effect, as a delegate for the French Federation of the International. 'The participation of Balivet in the Worker Congress of Lyon took place as a result of an agreement with the commission of the French Federation of the International, and the reports which he presented there were not his personal work,' Guillaume later declared, 'but a *collective work* which had been discussed and drawn up amongst ourselves.' According to Kropotkin, Balivet's speech had been based on ideas contained in a report of the Federal Commission of the French Federation of the International put together by himself, Brousse, Dumartheray and others in 1877.[34]

Balivet's efforts failed to make any impact on the Congress resolutions, which were very moderate. He was, however, one of the eleven delegates chosen to supervise the implementation of the resolutions

which suggests that the Congress was not altogether unsympathetic to the views he had put forward. *L'Avant-Garde* recognised that there was nothing revolutionary about the Congress but did not condemn it. 'We hope that it actually contains in germ, a truly socialist party which will be seen to develop in the future.'[35] Presumably Kropotkin's very presence in Paris at this time, as well as his close association with Brousse, would indicate that he must have shared this hope.

Unfortunately, by March the authorities had become anxious about the presence of foreign revolutionaries – Costa was arrested and Kropotkin was obliged to escape to Switzerland. The latter was thus prevented from taking any further part in the French movement for the time being. His attention now turned to Spain where severe unemployment in the area of Barcelona was expected to lead to revolts. He visited the country for six weeks in the summer of 1878. According to Nettlau, Kropotkin derived a new inspiration from his rediscovery of the revolutionary spirit of the old International in Spain which seemed to have disappeared from among the trade unionists in England, Belgium and the Jura.[36] Certainly, as we have seen, it was after his visit to Spain that Kropotkin began to urge a more clearly defined policy of revolutionary action on the Jura Federation.

The proceedings of the Congress of the Federation at Fribourg in 1878, which were dominated by the ideas of Brousse, Reclus and Kropotkin, marked a departure from the usual syndicalist internationalist approach that had characterised the congresses of previous years. (The Congress at St-Imier the preceding year had concerned itself with resolutions on *corps de métiers* in much the same way as previous congresses had done.) Although Schwitzguébel managed to secure the adoption of a resolution concerning the importance of organising the workers even outside the International, the main discussion centred on the need for the development of revolutionary socialist ideals and methods of revolutionary action within the local communes.[37]

Kropotkin, like Brousse, was intent on diverting the Jura Federation from its preoccupation with trade union organisation. At the same time however he clearly appreciated the need to radicalise the unions and the importance of aggressive strike action. In February 1879 he responded enthusiastically to violent strikes in Liverpool. 'Decidedly, the English strikes are entering a new phase,' he declared.[38] Miners' strikes in the Borinage encouraged him in January 1880 to hope that the spontaneous revolutionary movement would develop among the

miners in Belgium. 'The strike promotes organisation, and we will soon see all the Belgian miners organise themselves and start a much more important struggle than that which they could carry on on the ground of universal suffrage.'[39] Later, at the end of 1880, we find him giving an address to the carpenters' union in Geneva in which he impressed upon them the need to organise for the struggle against capital and the outbreak of revolution.[40] His basic preoccupation seems to have been to urge on the Federation the need for a wider and more positive programme of revolutionary action, both inside and outside trade union organisation. In 1879 at the Congress of La Chaux-de-Fonds, insisting on the urgent necessity to develop a policy of revolutionary action, he presented a report for the consideration of the sections during the winter months in which he insisted that every possible opportunity offered by even limited economic struggles of the oppressed against their exploiters, should be exploited for making socialist propaganda: 'and we are convinced that every agitation, begun on the basis of the struggle of the exploited against the exploiter, however limited at the beginning may be its sphere of action, the aims it gives itself and the ideas it puts forward can become a fruitful source of socialist agitation, if it does not fall into the hands of ambitious intriguers.'[41] But if Kropotkin recognised the need to radicalise the workers through the socialist exploitation of trade union struggles, he, along with Brousse, firmly rejected the old internationalist ideal which had survived among the Jurassians, according to which syndicalist organisation of the International would provide the basis of the new society. When the Jurassians discussed the question of the communes of the future society they meant federations of *corps de métiers*. At the Congress of La Chaud-de-Fonds in 1880 when Schwitzguébel discussed the organisation of local life in the wake of the revolution he declared, 'the organ of this social life will be the federation of trade unions [*corps de métiers*] and it is this federation which will constitute the future Commune.'[42] Kropotkin and Brousse, on the other hand, when they described the commune as the basic unit in a socialist society, meant the local urban or agricultural community. Take, for example, the following statement of Kropotkin at the Congress of Fribourg. 'It is necessarily under the banner of the independence of the municipal and agricultural communes that the next revolutions will be made. It is also in the independent communes that socialist tendencies are inevitably going to appear. It is there that the first outlines of the new society will be sketched out, on the bases of collectivism.'[43] In his report for the

Jura Federation of 1879 Kropotkin adopted a slightly different view when he declared that the basis of the new organisation would be 'at least in Latin countries, the free federation of producer groups, communes and groups of independent communes.' By 1880, however, he had adopted Reclus' much broader and more radical vision of communes based on the free association of individuals – a view which was adopted by the Federation as a criticism of the Report of the District of Courtelary presented by Schwitzguébel.

> The ideas put out about the Commune may give the impression that all we have to do is to replace the present form of the State with a more restricted form, which will be the Commune. We want the disappearance of every statist form whether general or restricted, the Commune would be for us only the synthetic expression of the organic form of free human groupings.[44]

Meanwhile, if Kropotkin's concentration on the importance of developing the spontaneous revolutionary action of the people led him to tend to focus his attention on strike action, what had become of the attempt of the anarchists to develop trade union organisation along revolutionary socialist lines in France?

It is clear from reports in *Le Révolté* that Kropotkin and his friends remained optimistic about the developing French labour movement, although they were disappointed by the non-revolutionary character of the strikes of 1879 and 1880. 'We predict that little good will come from these wars fought with *folded arms*. War fought with *raised arms* is better. At least then when we go to prison it is for some reason!'[45] They hoped that the very ineffectiveness of pacific methods in the face of savage repression would produce a more revolutionary approach among the workers. Commenting in October 1880 on military action taken against strikers at Denain, the French correspondent in *Le Révolté* wrote: 'Since the government is intervening in strikes in this way, since the peaceful strike is becoming impossible, what is left for the workers? To proceed by using fire like the Pittsburg strikers? Or to act like the Irish do towards their landlords? It seems to us that they are taking great steps towards such a state of affairs.'[46]

Meanwhile the labour movement at its annual Congress at Marseille in 1879 had finally rejected mutualism for socialism and decided on the foundation of a workers' socialist party. According to *Le Révolté*, the declarations of the Congress amounted to an unreserved commitment by the French proletariat to revolutionary socialism even though an immense effort would be necessary to turn this paper decision into a

reality throughout the working class.[47] Their optimism at this stage was eloquently summarised in an article of 1881 recalling the enthusiasm generated among revolutionaries by the Congress.

> We believed then that after the torpor had been shaken off a vast workers' organisation would be set up covering everything: chambres syndicales, corporations de métiers, unemployed, study groups etc., etc. – a vast organisation imbued with a single sentiment, the wish for economic emancipation of the worker, and pursuing a single aim, the war against capital in all its aspects . . . we saw the International Workingmen's Association everywhere reborn from its ashes and standing upright facing the bourgeois world, filling it with terror.[48]

This optimism appeared to have been justified when both the regional Congress at Marseille and that at Lyon in 1880 declared unequivocably for anti-statist revolutionary socialism. But this was the high-water mark of anarchist influence.

By 1880 considerable tension had been created in the movement by the conflict between the parliamentary approach of the guesdists and the anti-statist approach of the anarchists. Guesde and his friends had secured an initial tactical advantage in their defiance of a government ban on the proposed International Labour Congress of September 1878 when Guesde had turned their subsequent arrest and trial into a successful propaganda exercise. This probably marked a beginning of that influence on the developing labour movement which enabled Guesde to divert it gradually from revolutionary to parliamentary socialism. The National Congress of Marseille had included in its resolution about the creation of a workers socialist party a clause urging the need for parliamentary representation of the workers. Moreover, the Parti Ouvrier was founded very much under the inspiration of Guesde, and it was through this party that the guesdists developed their influence over the labour movement. The regional Congress of Paris in 1880 was dominated by the guesdists.[49] Finally the National Congress at Le Havre in November 1880 adopted Guesde's 'minimum programme' by a large majority. Some accommodation was indeed made to the anarchist view by the adoption of libertarian communism as a final aim, and by the declaration that should participation in the elections of 1881 prove unsuccessful the movement would revert to revolutionary action.[50]

In his New Year editorial of 1881, Kropotkin was still optimistic about the reviving workers' movement, particularly in the towns. But it is clear that this optimism was mixed with some anxiety. In a letter to a Belgian anarchist in late January he urged the need to support the

efforts of the French anarchists by a reconstitution of the IWA with its large sections of *corps de métiers* and its strikes.[51] On 5 February *Le Révolté* carried a vehement denunciation of the efforts to involve the labour movement in the forthcoming elections and insisted on the need to develop workers' organisation to wage a relentless war against capital.

> We are to organise the workers' forces – not to make them into a fourth party in parliament, but to turn them into a formidable machine for struggle against capital. We have to group all the trades together under the single aim, 'war against capitalist exploitation!' And we have to pursue this war continually each day, by the strike, by agitation, and by *all revolutionary methods*.
>
> And when we have worked at this organisation for two or three years, when the workers of every country have seen this organisation at work, taking into its hands the defence of the workers' interests, waging a relentless war against capital, and chastising the employer when the opportunity arises; when the workers of all trades, in the villages as in the towns, are united into a single battalion inspired by an identical idea, that of attacking capital, and by an identical hatred, the hatred of the employers – then the split between the bourgeoisie and workers being complete, we will be sure that it is on his own account that the worker will throw himself into the Revolution. Then, and only then, will he emerge victorious after having crushed the tyranny of Capital and the State for ever.[52]

On 14 May, *Le Révolté* contained a protest against the ten hours bill. It argued that the workers realised that no labour legislation could improve the working conditions in factories, and declared that working hours could only be reduced 'by the *strike* when it is supported by a strong *national and international* organisation'. The article urged the formation of a new labour organisation to undertake a direct struggle against capital.

> It is therefore essential for the French workers to re-establish a militant organisation, with the aim of defending the interests of labour. When they lay the first foundations of this organisation; when the workers' organisation establishes as its aim, not simply to make its members the most active deputies and senators, impotent and treacherous – but to wage the struggle against capital by the strike and by force . . . not only will the hours of work be reduced, but the working masses will have their own organisation ready to act in the interest of the worker on the day when events bring about the revolution.[53]

The anarchists were fighting hard to prevent the trade union developing in the direction of parliamentarism, and as a consequence of this *Le Révolté* was now expressing ideas about trade unionism, which although more frankly insurrectionary, had a marked affinity with those of direct action developed by the leading Jurassians in the mid-seventies – also partly as a reaction to parliamentarism.

Meanwhile, the struggle with the guesdists resulted in the withdrawal of the anarchists from the labour movement and the Parti Ouvrier at the Regional Congress of Paris in May 1881. Disappointed in hopes for the French trade union movement, Kropotkin nevertheless remained convinced that federations of *corps de métiers* should play an important part in the development of a revolutionary organisation of the people. In November 1881, *Le Révolté* carried an enthusiastic report about the reviving movement in Spain where, unlike in France, the socialists were building up not a parliamentary but a popular revolutionary organisation, based on both federations of *corps de métiers* and socialist groups. This report concluded with a call to the French workers to take up again like their Spanish brothers, the traditions of the International, 'to organise themselves outside any political party by writing on their banner: *Solidarity in the struggle against capital*.'[54] Clearly, Kropotkin wanted the French workers to abandon the guesdist-dominated labour movement to set up a new organisation which, whilst revolutionary, would still remain primarily, though not exclusively, syndicalist. And judging from the interest of *Le Révolté* in strike action, he seems to have regarded strikes as a starting point for revolutionary organisation. To stress its identification with the struggle of the masses in the strike *Le Révolté* severely criticised the Parti Ouvrier (as it had previously criticised the Parti Socialiste Belge) for tending to discourage strike action in the pursuit of parliamentary power.[55]

The Strikers' International

Kropotkin's hostility to the trade-union-based Parti Ouvrier was actually expressing itself in a way which suggests that partly in response to the syndicalist character of the Spanish movement and partly as a result of violent strikes like those of Pittsburg (1877) and of the Borinage (1879–80), he now recognised greater revolutionary potential in trade union organisation and strikes than he had previously done, in spite of the setbacks in France. In fact, he was particularly interested in violent strikes as a means of counteracting the reformist influence of parliamentary agitation. He seems to have thought that, whilst the adoption of moderate methods would lead to the abandonment of revolutionary ideals, revolutionary action could actually stimulate the development of those ideals whose aims were only moderate. An article expressing this view appeared in *Le Révolté*

in October 1881 (which was almost certainly written by Kropotkin since no one else involved with the paper at that time had as much experience and knowledge of the English trade union movement. The writer described how successful the latter had been when it had been an illegal organisation and had employed tactics of strikes and force. 'Whilst the trade unions [in English in the text] stuck to the illegal ground as prohibited organisations, and proceeded by the strike and by force, they constituted a terrible power, that the employers [*patrons*] ended up by respecting.'[56] Once the unions had secured legal status and had abandoned revolutionary tactics the movement had turned into a fourth estate made up of an elite of labour which had become a mere attachment of the liberal bourgeoisie and which was content to limit its demands to the microscopic reforms contained in liberal party programmes. In contrast to this the Irish Land League,

> which proceeds by revolutionary methods: boycott, resistance by force to evictions etc., although it may have started with an excessively moderate demand – no high rents – did not cease to add to its programme . . . today, its watchword has already become *No more rents! Land to the cultivator.*[57]

This demonstrated how revolutionary methods of agitation in the relation between capital and labour could transform moderate into revolutionary demands whilst a preoccupation with parliamentary politics could lead to a total abandonment of an advanced programme.

> The teaching is very simple. However moderate the war cry – provided it is in the domain of relations between capital and labour – as soon as it proceeds to put it into practice by revolutionary methods, it ends up by increasing it and will be led to demand the overthrow of the régime of property. On the other hand a party which confines itself to parliamentary politics ends up abandoning its programme, however advanced it may have been at the beginning.[58]

An article such as this, of course, reveals a somewhat ambivalent attitude to trade unions which, in Kropotkin's case, reflected a preoccupation with economic terrorism and an increasing interest in the revolutionary action of small groups. In fact, in the early summer of 1881 he had tried to give some sort of coherent expression to this approach in his proposals to Malatesta about the future development/revival of the International.

As we have seen, he had been enthusiastic about the idea of reorganising the IWA proposed at the Belgian Revolutionary Congress at Verviers in December 1880 because of his fears about the anarchist movement degenerating into an organisation of revolutionaries

isolated from the masses. And we find him discussing ideas for making socialist propaganda to promote the IWA amongst the workers in England and Belgium in a letter to a Belgian anarchist in February 1881.[59] Moreover, still hopeful about the revolutionary potential of trade unions, he had been anxious that the labour movement should not be abandoned to the mercies of the radicals and moderates. In his view it was necessary to prevent anarchist isolation from the masses and the labour movement by activating the reorganisation of the great body of working-class forces which could only be done through the reconstitution of the IWA with its large sections of *corps de métiers* and strikes. He had therefore suggested the formation of two separate groupings in the International: alongside one which would be secret, small and concerned with organising economic terrorism there would be another which would be open, based on the trade union movement and concerned with the grouping together of the forces of labour and the transformation of strikes into riots. He had been insistent both on the necessity and practicability of re-establishing what he called *L'Internationale Gréviste*. In the event of, for example, a large strike in Switzerland, there were unions in Geneva sympathetic with the anarchists who would support such action even though they could not be recruited into secret groups. These workers should not be rejected but encouraged to be more radical by joining together in the struggle and thereby re-establishing the strikers' International.

> Should there be a strike tomorrow in Geneva we have with us the carpenters and stonemasons, we can count on that. Do we kick them out? Or rather should we try to bring them out and make them more militant? Very well I say: if tomorrow there is a big strike in Switzerland we urge the engineering workers to send out an invitation to the unions [*sociétés*]. They will meet, choose a Support Committee and the Strikers' International will be reconstituted.[60]

In France similarly, once the law against the International had been abolished, all the anarchist groups of the Midi would federate with each other, although few members of these groups would be persuaded to join secret groups. The majority had to be shown a field of action under the banner of the *Internationale Gréviste* otherwise they would join the Parti Ouvrier to promote parliamentary candidatures. Only in this way could the organisation of the masses for action be achieved and it would not be too difficult because the strikes were now militant and it was possible for the International to undertake the task of transforming strikes into riots.

> Is it the same for France? The law on the International will soon be repealed or disregarded. All the anarchist groups of the south . . . will federate immediately. But, what would they do but organise the strike? Where an envoy from an anarchist organisation finds one or two men in each town to make a core of secret groups – that is certainly what will have to be done. But what will the others do? If we do not show them a field of action – they will go into the parti ouvrier, to send Malon and X to the Senate and Municipality.
>
> I do not see any other field of acition for those who cannot join in the secret groups under the flag of the *Strikers' International*. It is only through this that we can succeed in grouping together the workers' forces, the masses.
>
> There is nothing wrong with this. The strike is no longer the war with folded arms. The grouping continually takes on the task of transforming it into a riot . . . I firmly believe, with all my heart in the absolute necessity of reconstructing an organisation for resistance.

Malatesta was not hostile to trade unionism as such, for in spite of his speeches at the Congress of Berne in 1876, we find him taking a leading part in the development of a militant trade unionism in Buenos Aires in the 1880s. But he did not share Kropotkin's views about the importance of the economic struggle or the revolutionary potential of a militant trade union movement and had showed little interest in the idea of a strikers' international. As we have seen, more concerned to promote the revolutionary struggle against governments than a narrowly economic struggle against capital, he had urged the formation of a broad-based conspiratorial organisation for revolution. Kropotkin had been bitterly disappointed at Malatesta's response and the arguments that followed at the Congress of London. But he was not discouraged.

In December 1881 he appears to have produced two articles – 'L'Organisation Ouvrière'[61] – in which he discussed the revival of the International as an *Internationale Gréviste* and the strike as a revolutionary tactic. He began by re-stating a basic point in his approach that means must be in conformity with aims, and arguing that therefore the battle to effect a fundamental change of the social and economic structure of society could only be fought successfully using revolutionary methods in the economic field – parliamentary methods produced only changes of government. The tactics in the war against capital, which would be determined by what groups of workers felt to be appropriate for their own locality, would certainly include the strike. And he concluded the first article by insisting that they must direct their efforts into the economic field without being deflected by the sham agitation of parliamentary parties:

Since the enemy on whom we declare war is capital, it is against capital that we have to direct our efforts, without allowing ourselves to be distracted from our aim by the sham agitation of political parties. Since the great struggle for which we prepare ourselves, is an essentially *economic* struggle, it is on the economic ground that our agitation has to take place.

Let us place ourselves on this ground alone, and we will see, how the great working masses will come to strengthen our ranks, how they will group themselves under the banner of the league of Workers. Then we will become a force, and on the day of revolution, this force will impose its will on the exploiter of every sort.

In the second article Kropotkin concentrated his attention almost exclusively on the strike. He began by stressing that the practical methods of struggle for each locality had to be decided by local groups themselves without reference to the advice of a paper. But *Le Révolté* would express an opinion on the strike because although it might not be the best, even less the only method of agitation, it was the weapon imposed on workers by the necessities of the moment and used by them in all countries. It was particularly important to discuss this question of strikes because of the efforts of false friends of the workers to deflect the working class from this method of struggle into the rut of politics.[62] Certainly, he recognised that the strike could not be the means whereby the workers would gain their freedom. The oppressed, however, could not wait for the revolution to happen; they had to organise themselves to make that revolution. And militant action against employers was a good way of doing this, for strikes focussed the movement on the struggle against capital and involved those not obviously committed to socialism as well as those who were.

To be able to make the revolution, the mass of workers will have to organise themselves. Resistance and the strike are excellent methods of organisation for doing this. They have an immense advantage over those which are advocated today [i.e. political methods] they do not take the movement off course, but keep it continually at grips with the principal enemy, the capitalist. The strike and resistance fund provide means of organising not only those committed to socialism (who seek each other out and organise themselves) but above all those who are still not socialists although they ask nothing better than to be converted.

He insisted that the workers wanted nothing better than help to develop the organisation they lacked and went on to urge the need to build up a vast international federation of trade unions to make a reality of working-class solidarity.

It is a question of organising societies of resistance for all trades in each town, of creating resistance funds against the exploiters, of giving more solidarity to the workers' organisations of each town and of putting them in contact with those of

other towns, of federating them throughout France, and eventually across frontiers. Workers' solidarity must no longer be an empty word but be practised each day between all trades and all nations.

He denied that the strike was animated by a narrow selfishness, for a man did not endure months of suffering during a strike to become a petit bourgeois, but to save his family from starvation. 'And then far from developing egoistical instincts, the strike develops the sentiment of solidarity, the moment it happens within an organisation. How often have the starving not shared their meagre wages with their brothers on strike?'[63] The history of the International had clearly demonstrated this. The IWA had been essentially a strikers' international until a part of it had been deflected into parliamentary struggles. And it was the International that had elaborated the basic principles of modern socialism.

The International was born of strikes; it was fundamentally a strikers' organisation, until the bourgeoisie, assisted by the ambitious, succeeded in sweeping a part of the Association into parliamentary struggles. And meanwhile it is precisely this organisation which was able to elaborate in its sections and Congresses, the broad principles of modern Socialism, which give us our strength; for with all due respect to the so-called scientific socialists – until the present there has not been a single idea on socialism which has not been articulated in the Congresses of the International.

The practice of the strike had actually helped the sections get to grips with the social question as well as enabling them to propagate the socialist idea among the masses. Contemporary strike action was developing the spirit of revolt among the strikers because it often involved a direct and violent confrontation with the state.

There is almost no serious strike which occurs today without the appearance of troops, the exchange of blows and some acts of revolt. Here they fight with the troops; there they march on the factories; in 1873, in Spain, the strikers of Alcoy proclaimed the Commune and shot the bourgeois; in Pittsburg in the United States, the strikers found themselves masters of a territory as large as France, and the strike became the signal for a general revolt against the State; in Ireland the peasants on strike found themselves in open revolt against the State. Thanks to government intervention the rebel against the factory becomes the rebel against the State.

He added that the deprivations endured by the workers during a strike did more to spread socialism than all the public meetings of calmer times and illustrated this with the example of the strikers of Ostran in Austria whose sufferings had led them to requisition the basic necessi-

ties from shops in the town and to proclaim their right to social wealth.[64]

Nevertheless, whilst the strike was an excellent method of organisation and one of the most effective forms of action for the masses in their fight against capital, he hastened to add that there was also the everyday struggle of groups or even individuals where there could be an infinite variety of action arising out of local situations.

Clearly Kropotkin was anxious to revive the International as an organisation for aggressive strike action to counteract the influence of parliamentary socialists on the labour movement. But at the same time, he needed to allay the doubts of those anarchists now obsessed with the bomb and propaganda by deed, who were sceptical of the revolutionary possibilities of trade unions and strikes. As a result, he seems to have advocated an approach which achieved a remarkable fusion of anarchist communist ideas with both bakuninist internationalist views adopted in the Spanish Federation and the syndicalist ideas developed in the Jura Federation in the 1870s. Like the early bakuninists he advocated a decentralised organisation of federations of *corps de métiers*, recognised the educational role of trade unions and argued that solidarity would develop through syndicalist action. Like the Jurassians, he recognised the value of the strike as a mode of direct action and possibly envisaged a revolutionary general strike (it is unclear however to what extent his preoccupation with the expression of solidarity between unions signified more than an implied commitment to the idea of the general strike). However, he attached much greater importance to spontaneity than did the Spanish bakuninists or even the Jurassians: in a letter to the almost moribund Jura Federation in June 1882 exhorting members to take more energetic action, he stressed above all the importance of identifying with the spontaneous action of the workers themselves. 'What is necessary is spontaneous action, originating in workers' protest, arising out of the situation itself and in which we, the organised element must be only the expression of the sentiments of the labouring masses.'[65] Kropotkin, moreover, no longer shared the bakuninist anxiety to avoid a premature confrontation with capital; as an anarchist communist he saw preparation for revolution in terms of a proliferation of acts of revolt by individuals and small groups on the one hand and by the masses on the other where setbacks would actually help to fire the spirit of revolt. And in this context he saw strikes, particularly violent strikes, as a form of collective

action in which the masses would develop their struggle against the forces of capital.

He actually seems to have thought that this fusion of revolutionary and syndicalist ideas had taken place in the Spanish Federation. In fact there was considerable tension between the bakuninists of Andalusia and those of Catalonia which was eventually to find expression in the quarrels between anarchist communists and collectivists.[66] But what effect did Kropotkin's ideas on trade unions and strikes have on the French-speaking anarchist movement?

As regards the Jura Federation, a resolution about trade unions at their annual Congress of 1882 does seem to reflect Kropotkin's ideas. 'The Congress, recognising the great utility of every workers' organisation, declares solidarity with every strike and every struggle on the economic ground.'[67] The previous rather narrow preoccupation with trade union organisation and the need to form more unions had now been replaced by a concern to radicalise the trade unions from within and to urge upon members the need to develop and intensify the struggle against capital through militant strike action. But the discussion focussed as much on the difficulties of developing revolutionary attitudes among trade unionists as it did on the need to do so. Only Dumartheray and Dejoux (the editor of *Le Droit Social* and a delegate from Lyon) seem to have expressed any real optimism about the possibilities of radicalising the unions when they described how the workers at Villefranche had changed from being pacific to being revolutionary during a recent strike. Dumartheray actually insisted that as long as the workers were prepared to undertake an *economic* struggle this could only have good results from the point of view of the social revolution, for this was the only way to ensure that the forthcoming revolution would be a social revolution. Indeed, he envisaged the ultimate possibility of a general strike as a result of agitation just being prepared in the economic field. But Dumartheray's fighting talk only serves to underline the lack of dynamism in the approach of the other delegates. It seems likely that with Kropotkin's departure from Switzerland any real effort to influence the trade union movement had been virtually abandoned.[68] And certainly this is the conclusion that has to be drawn from the letter Kropotkin sent to the Congress in which he lamented the lack of action in the Federation and urged members to adopt a programme of immediate agitation in the economic field.[69]

The groups in Paris had been largely alienated from the labour movement as a result of their defeat by the guesdists at the Regional Con-

gress of the Parti Ouvrier in July 1880. Even so, they did not entirely give up interest in the *chambres syndicales*. A group calling itself *l'Aiguille* played an important part in the Tailors Union, securing a declaration in favour of the general strike at a meeting of members in 1885. Its efforts to oppose the pacific element however resulted in internal dissension rather than effective action. A more successful anarchist attempt to radicalise trade unions developed when a leading trade union militant, Joseph Tortelier, joined the anarchist movement in 1884 and eventually succeeded in persuading the Builders' *chambres syndicales* of Paris to declare for the general strike at a large meeting in November 1887.[70] But the main effort of the anarchists, where the promotion of collective revolutionary action was concerned, was directed towards the organisation of meetings and demonstrations of the unemployed, which provided very good opportunities for revolutionary agitation. There was in any case, of course, generally less uncritical support for the approach of *Le Révolté* in Parisian anarchist circles than in the Jura Federation. In Wallonia in the early 1880s the anarchists stood firm in their determination not to compromise on their principles, and they frustrated the efforts of the PSB to form a union of all socialist workers' organisations at their Congress held at Liège in 1883. They do not seem to have been interested in trade unions. The main working-class collective activity focussed on the development of the Société Cooperative Ouvrière Meunerie et Boulangerie set up in November 1884 and in fact the trade union movement itself failed to develop either its organisation or support at Verviers during these years. The approach of the anarchists of Wallonia was probably similar to that of the groups in Paris.

Some sections of the movement, in their increasing preoccupation with the bomb and propaganda by deed, undoubtedly rejected trade unionism and strikes altogether. Take, for example, the Bordeaux group which in March 1882 had refused support to strikers in Lyon on the grounds that each group must learn, at its own expense, the dangers of thinking any amelioration could be achieved through strikes.[71]

Articles in *Le Révolté* at this time nevertheless reflected an increasing optimism about strike action. The very size and bitterness of the strikes of miners at La Grand'Combe and Bessièges, and weavers at Roanne encouraged belief that the strikers were about to abandon pacific for violent tactics, particularly when the young Fournier fired at the hated Bréchard in March 1882.[72] At the defeat of the strikers of La Grand' Combe in January *Le Révolté* had declared, 'the exploited of La Grand'

Combe, defeated once more on the economic field of battle... have to be convinced of this undeniable fact, that nothing is gained by compromises with the natural enemy, that is to say with the privileged owner of the community's equipment... efficacy lies only in war without truce and hatred without mercy.'[73] In March it asserted that in spite of the defeat they had suffered, the strikers of Bessièges had made progress. 'Already, the movement of Bessièges has had a more marked character than that of La Grand'Combe: if *this crescendo* continues, it will not be long before we see in France, midst the industrial masses of the great industrial centres the beginnings of a revolutionary agitation analogous to that which manifests itself with so much energy in Ireland amongst the rural populations.'[74] By June 1882 *Le Révolté* was claiming that a proliferation of strikes was leading to a revolutionary explosion. 'The fact is, indeed, the moment for action approaches. On all sides, strikes are appearing. In Paris alone, apart from the refinery workers, the shoemakers, carpenters and engine drivers of the Lyon railway are on strike. Certainly, the bourgeois machine is breaking down.'[75] Such expressions of optimism had been reinforced partly by the lack of success of the Parti Ouvrier in attracting mass support in the elections of 1881, and partly by the internal dissensions that followed culminating in a split at the Workers' Congress of 1882 at St Etienne.[76] In September *Le Révolté* was announcing triumphantly that Bordat of Lyon, the only anarchist delegate, had been accorded an enthusiastic reception at St Etienne because the workers were not interested in the quarrels between their leaders.[77] In October the paper declared that the Parti Ouvrier was finished and that the workers were now turning to the anarchist flag.[78]

In fact, such optimism, although probably based more on wishful thinking than genuine conviction, was not entirely unjustified in view of the situation in South Eastern France where the influence of the broussists and guesdists tended to be overshadowed by that of the anarchists. The regional congresses for the East and South East of 1880 had been dominated by the anarchists. When the anarchists had broken away from the Parti Ouvrier in June 1881 they had taken the majority with them at the regional congress of the Midi. In the East they had created their own lively Fédération révolutionnaire de l'Est made up of groups from St Etienne, Villefranche, Roanne and Lyon.

As we have seen, Kropotkin was particularly hopeful about the Lyonnais movement and had received a warm reception from workers at meetings he had addressed in that region on his way from Switzer-

land to England in the autumn of 1881. He was chosen to represent the Fédération révolutionnaire de l'Est at the London Congress of 1881, and it was to this area he returned at the end of October 1882. But to what extent did the anarchists of the Lyon region actually respond to Kropotkin's ideas about the labour movement?

The contributions of Dejoux to the discussions of the Congress of the Jura Federation in 1882, suggest that the Lyonnais shared Dumartheray's view over the question of trade unions and strikes. And although there does not seem to have been a sustained effort to develop syndicalist organisation in the Lyon region, anarchists did take part in trade unions. In 1882 they actually constituted a majority in the shoemakers' union at Lyon. In February 1883 they tried to create a breakaway union of cabinet makers at St Etienne. From 1882 they seem to have exercised a strong influence on the miners' union again at St Etienne, and by 1884 this enabled them to persuade the union to declare for the general strike. Opposition however from the local moderate and popular leader, Rondet, frustrated efforts to get the tactic adopted by miners' delegates meeting at St Etienne in April. In May, under the inspiration of a miner called Rivet, the anarchists attempted to establish the Union Fédérative des Mineurs Révolutionnaires, but the attempt failed in spite of the decline of Rondet's popularity as a result of the role he had played in the events of 1884, for the squabbles had weakened the union movement among the miners instead of radicalising it.

The interest and activity of the Lyonnais anarchist movement in fact focussed less on trade unions and strikes than it did on acts of revolt and riots – forms of protest and agitation which characterised the events at Montceau-les-Mines in August 1882. Kropotkin shared the excitement about events here but when he arrived back in France his immediate concern seems to have been to try and encourage the revival of the *Internationale Gréviste*. Moreover, as we have seen, he was not able to interest the Lyonnais anarchists in the International because they did not think it revolutionary enough.

Manifestly, Kropotkin's ideas about the labour movement at this stage had a definite influence on the anarchist movement in the Jura and South Eastern France, but that influence did not extend much beyond a broad acceptance of the need to radicalise trade unions and strikes. There was no real interest in Kropotkin's vision of the *Internationale Gréviste* and indeed there was now a tendency for all sections of the anarchist movement to be much more interested in the spon-

taneous protests of crowds, groups and individuals than in trade union-based action. Already in July 1883, the Jura Federation was exhibiting an intense preoccupation with independent acts of revolt by individuals and small groups with only the vaguest cooperation with each other.[79] The Lyonnais and Jurassian movements were in fact becoming hostile to the idea of an organised movement of any sort. At a meeting at Geneva in August 1882 French and Swiss delegates had insisted on the absolute autonomy of groups and a declaration of the delegate from Cette – 'We are united because we are divided' – had been unanimously applauded.[80]

These attitudes intensified in the wake of the repression that followed the Lyon trials in 1883. Deprived of its leading militants and with its organisation, such as it was, seriously damaged, the movement was now so fragmented that groups were inevitably somewhat isolated from each other. A proposal by the Spanish Federation for a Congress in Barcelona in 1884 was rejected by the French because they declared that congresses were a threat to the liberty and independence of the federations. In fact it seems likely that an International Congress in such circumstances was as irrelevant as it was impracticable. The anarchists were in no position to think in terms of building up a national organisation in France, let alone an international one, in spite of the sympathy generated by the Lyon trials. The sheer practical difficulties of their situation also made it inevitable that they would become even more obsessed with individual and isolated acts of violence rather than collective trade union action. As we have already seen, anarchist propaganda in the Lyon area suggested that any idea of organised struggle was to be abandoned in favour of a sort of continuous anarchistic guerilla war against the bourgeoisie. The same sort of talk was rife in Paris.

During the years of Kropotkin's imprisonment, *Le Révolté* continued to interest itself in strikes as a form of direct and potentially revolutionary action in the struggle of labour against capital in the economic field out of which a movement for popular expropriation would emerge.[81]

The paper frequently denounced what it called the socialist *endormeurs* whom it claimed hindered revolutionary development by exhorting strikers to limit themselves to pacific and legal action. Contempt was poured upon the miners' leaders Basly and Roche when they persuaded the miners of Anzin to abandon violence during a strike in April 1884: *Le Révolté* referred disparagingly to the leaders as

'*Messieurs les radicaux*', and declared that the crushing defeat sustained by the miners had been facilitated by the strikers' agreement to treat peacefully with the employers.[82] It lamented how in the early months of 1886 a potentially revolutionary strike at Decazeville had gradually succumbed to the moderating influence of the socialists.[83] In April of the same year it bitterly attacked the way the socialists of Flanders and Brussels had failed to support the outbreak of strikes sparked off by the anarchists at Liège, declaring that with such support the strikes could have escalated into a revolution.

Acting with true revolutionary instinct, the strikers, without losing a single moment, in two days devastated the entire neighbouring countryside . . . Factories, convents and villas went up in flames. The red flag was streaming in the wind.

If, at that moment, the large towns had acted; if the workers of Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent had raised the standard of revolt . . . this would probably have meant a revolution.[84]

But although *Le Révolté* directed its most stringent criticism at the socialist *endormeurs* it was disturbed by the failure of the anarchists to make any significant impact on labour struggles outside protest meetings and demonstrations of the unemployed – particularly in the case of large strikes like those at Anzin and Decazeville where the strength of working-class solidarity in the face of capitalist intransigence provided an important opportunity for intensifying the struggle against capital along revolutionary lines. In fact the economic crisis, where strikes tended to be defensive and working-class discontent often erupted in spontaneous and even violent acts of protest, had all the features of the sort of situation in which the anarchists expected to evoke a sympathetic response to their ideas. Yet there was little evidence that they had made significant progress outside Paris, except perhaps at Vienne.[85] This would seem to be partly because they had failed to involve themselves with labour at the workplace level outside the strikes. Certainly this is the impression of comments in *Le Révolté* made as a result of the Anzin strike.

Indeed, the fact is that it would have been enough for ideas about the *repossession* of land, tolls and capital to be developed a little more profoundly amongst the masses for a strike to become dangerous and a menace to the privileged. It would have been enough for the milieu in which the strike must break out to have been prepared by strong propaganda and the anarchist ideas to have been developed clearly there for the masses to fall on their exploiters of their own volition.

If the anarchists can do this work if they can make serious propaganda and put themselves in contact with these purely workers' centres, which so far they have

not attempted to work on, strikes will no longer be anodine but become a powerful means of agitation.[86]

Obviously as far as *Le Révolté* was concerned the anarchists were not making any real effort to establish firm relationships with the workers or their organisations in industrial centres. The paper suggested a similar feature of anarchist propaganda in its reports of the Decazeville strike in 1886. They revealed for instance that even after the strike had been going on for two months the Decazeville miners still knew nothing about anarchism. 'When the reporters . . . asked if any anarchist propaganda had been made before, if they had had any visit from any anarchist whatever, these good people looked them straight in the eyes and asked them what they meant by anarchists.'[87] According to an article (probably by Grave) which appeared some years later, although the anarchists had had no contact with the miners of Decazeville prior to the strike, they had established a relationship once it had begun in an effort to evoke a sympathy and interest in anarchist ideas.

When it [the Decazeville strike] broke out, the anarchists did not have any connections amongst the miners; they organised meetings in aid of the strikers, opened subscription funds and collected quite significant sums so as to be able to dispatch one of their number, who, whilst sharing out the funds that common solidarity had provided, could use the opportunity to develop our ideas.

Arriving there empty handed and without being known, the comrade would not have been listened to or would have been taken for a provocateur or a hireling of the company.

Arriving with proof of solidarity, he was listened to. The miners did not become anarchists, but the idea was revealed to them; they were prepared to listen to other anarchists. It will be for time, reflection and circumstances to do the rest: the anarchists cannot hope for more.[88]

Obviously much more of an effort had been made on this occasion than perhaps on others. But again the anarchists had only attempted to influence the miners once the strike had begun and again they had not been very successful in comparison to Parti Ouvrier leaders like Basly, because their effort had not been related to a systematic attempt to help and influence the workers and their organisations in the day to day struggle with capital. In the light of this the activity of the Liège anarchists is perhaps more significant and interesting for it sparked off demonstrations and strikes by propaganda based on an established relationship with the workers of Liège and a hard core of support in the labour movement of Wallonia which had survived in spite of the advances of the PSB.[89]

The basic problem for the French anarchist movement during the first half of the decade was that in separating themselves from the guesdist-dominated Parti Ouvrier, they had tended inevitably to isolate themselves from the labour movement, and therefore had little real scope outside strikes for influencing the development of trade unionism, particularly after the repression of 1883. In a discussion of syndicalism in 1908, Grave later insisted that the isolation from the syndicalist movement at this time had been dictated not by any hostility to the labour movement as such, but by the enfeoffment of trade unions to the political parties.[90] In 1907 Kropotkin himself, maintaining that anarchist involvement with trade unions was important, explained: 'But if during this time we had not been clearly separated from the Baslys and Guesdes – by tactics, organisation and our way of thinking – it is probable that the ideology would not have gained anything from it.'[91] By the time he was released from prison, Kropotkin had become very concerned about the question of aims and ideals. And indeed his principal preoccupation now was the clarification and exposition of the anarchist aim of popular expropriation in the belief that the sort of revolutionary action necessary to produce a real social revolution would only develop where the agitators had a clear grasp of this concept. He does not, therefore, seem to have applied his attention very much to the problem of anarchists and the labour movement at this point, although an interesting article about the Belgian strikes of 1886 appeared in *Le Révolté* in February 1887, which could have been written by Kropotkin and is certainly evocative of his views.[92] It argued for the importance of systematically propagandising in favour of the idea of popular expropriation among the workers so that when violent strikes and riots broke out again they would be more than simple acts of desperation.

It is certain that such revolts will occur, maybe in the mining basins, maybe in the great manufacturing centres.

If these revolts are mere revolts of despair, they will have the same negative outcome. But *it is necessary to foresee them* and to act accordingly.

We have to say this to ourselves: it is certain that between now and the revolution, there will be similar riots – of hunger and despair: they will kill Watrin, burn a factory. That is a lot. But it is not all that is necessary. The riot must set forth *an idea*, pose *a principle* – that of the *expropriation* of the mine and the factory.

To do this, ideas have to be prepared *in advance*. When the riot breaks out, there must be two or three men, generally respected for their probity, devotion and revolutionary temperament. These will be regarded as the *enragés* in the calm period; but it is they who will be followed when the riot breaks out in the mine or in the work place.[93]

The only article Kropotkin seems to have produced in 1886 with any specific reference to the trade union movement and strikes was 'La Guerre Sociale', a passionate response to the shooting of strikers and protesters on 3 and 4 May in Chicago. On this occasion he actually referred disparagingly to the Eight Hour Day Movement as a creation of the Knights of Labour – '*cette organisation conservatrice*' – and insisted that the workers would have to disarm the bourgeoisie by expropriating capital if a war of extermination against all those who dared to revolt against the capitalists were to be avoided.[94]

Convinced that the trade union movement was now dominated by parliamentary socialists, in spite of the opposition to the influence of politicians manifested by trade unionists at the Congress to establish the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats in 1886, he was now thinking primarily in terms of agitation to transform violent disturbances into acts of expropriation. Indeed, it is possible that in view of the state of the labour movement and the prevailing anarchist distaste for organisation of any sort, certainly in the French-speaking sections of the movement, Kropotkin had at least for the time being abandoned his vision of the *Internationale Gréviste*. Bordat and Martin addressed a meeting a Lyon in May 1886 during which they called on the workers to form an organisation of their own, independent of political parties.[95] The leader article for the New Year of 1887 in *Le Révolté*, however, lamenting the inadequacy of working-class organisation for revolution, indicated that such an idea was unrelated to practical realities and possibilities. It is perhaps significant that the articles 'L'Organisation Ouvrière' did not appear in *Paroles d'un Révolté*.

When his interest and concern about anarchist involvement in the trade union movement had revived, Kropotkin wrote again about the Haymarket affair. This time he argued that the Chicago anarchists had made a mistake in not involving themselves in the union and strike movement of 1886 for this had meant that they had not been on the spot at the McCormick Harvester works on 3 May to encourage the strikers to fight back when fired on.[96]

Kropotkin's interest in the revolutionary potentiality of the trade union movement revived primarily in response to the strikes which, in England in 1889, marked the beginning of the New Unionism. From then on, his enthusiasm for anarchist involvement with the masses in the labour movement never wavered in spite of later reservations about the revolutionary syndicalism which emerged at the Congress of

Amsterdam in 1907, and an obsession with the need to defeat German militarism which led him in 1913 to actually reject the idea of a general strike against war.[97]

The Great Dock Strike had a particular significance for Kropotkin because it took place in England, a country whose moderate trade unionism he believed had had such a pernicious effect on the labour movement in Europe. Although the strike had ended in a compromise between the strikers and the bourgeoisie instead of popular expropriation, it had shown, he claimed, how a mass of underprivileged, unskilled workers could spontaneously create their own labour union and develop an effective strike organisation to fight capital. He was impressed by the total solidarity displayed by the large numbers of workers involved and their ability to act without heavy reliance on experienced, institutionalised leadership. Moreover, the strikers' success in paralysing the commercial life of the capital had demonstrated, in his view, the practical possibility of a general strike as a way of preparing for revolution.[98] Convinced of the revolutionary potentiality of the New Unionism in uniting workers in the fight against capital, he was disappointed by anarchists who criticised it yet failed to get involved in order to encourage its development along revolutionary lines.[99] Even though he did not accept the strictures of Tarrida del Marmol, who, in September 1890, complained that a narrow preoccupation with theory during the 1880s had isolated French anarchists from the masses in contrast with their counterparts in Spain who had maintained their links with the labour movement, he was concerned about the failure of anarchists in France to respond to the new militancy in the French labour movement s it began to shake off the reformist influence of the guesdists.

Kropotkin was equally enthusiastic about the May Day Movement which he believed had developed spontaneously amongst the masses to wrest the eight-hour day from the capitalists by means of a demonstration which was in effect a one-day strike. In response to purists who argued that it would weaken the rising tide of revolt by exhausting revolutionary energy, providing an opportunity for government repression and inhibiting individual initiative, he replied that within one or two years the one-day demonstration would be turned into a general strike by popular agreement and that since the strength of individual initiative lay in awakening the spirit of revolt amongst the masses, the men of action would now be with them in the popular movement.[100] In 'Le Premier Mai' Kropotkin developed his ideas about

the need for anarchist involvement in the new militant unionism and the May Day Movement, both to counteract the influence of reformists and social democrats and to give these popular movements a revolutionary character: he also explained how anarchists could propagandise the people through active involvement in their struggles without betraying one word of their anarchist principles – a point already made by Tarrida del Marmol.[101] Anxious about the situation in France and bitterly disappointed at the way the New Unionism in England had succumbed to parliamentary influences, Kropotkin, in November 1891 took a leading part with Malatesta in a conference in London which issued a general statement calling for more anarchist involvement in the labour movement.

He did not think, however, that unionism necessarily had a revolutionary potential: as he explained in his notes to Nettlau in 1895, there was a clear distinction between the *trade* union which was narrowly preoccupied with the egotistical struggle for higher wages and shorter hours, and the *labour* union which was committed to the direct struggle against capital: and it was the latter, he argued, which, because it could bring together a million men ready to proclaim their right to well-being and the means of attaining it, could achieve a great deal more than simple propaganda, even if they could not accomplish the revolution.

He undoubtedly had seen great possibilities in the New Unionism: for example, apart from the general strike he had been impressed by the development of direct action in the form of the tactic of 'ca-canny' (sabotage) which had surfaced amongst the dockers in Glasgow and Liverpool in 1889–90.[102] But it was the revolutionary syndicalism beginning to emerge in France during the 1890s as the influence of the social democrats declined and that of the anarchists increased, which actually developed the ideas of direct action.

For Kropotkin, revolutionary syndicalism represented a revival of the great movement of the Anti-authoritarian International which the marxists were effectively trying to destroy at the congresses of the Second International by directing it into parliamentary channels just as they had done at the Congress of Basle in 1872.[103] It seems likely that he saw in it the *Internationale Gréviste* which he had advocated earlier. In his message to a meeting in London of delegates from British and French unions in 1901 he called for 'an International Federation of all Trade Unions all over the world' where workers would 'support each other irrespective of political opinions and nationality in the direct

struggle of labour against capital.'[104] Correspondence with Guillaume during the early 1900s also suggested that he was even involved in an effort initiated by the latter to re-establish and develop the secret grouping based on the old *intimité* as proposed to Malatesta in 1881. For example, when making the point that syndicalism was not necessarily revolutionary in a letter to Bertoni in 1914, he underlined the importance of the work and influence of the old *intimité* in the Anti-authoritarian International as outlined in a recent article in *La Volontà* by Malatesta declaring, 'It needs another element about which Malatesta spoke and Bakunin always practised.'[105]

Kropotkin did not identify revolutionary syndicalism with anarchism as many anarchists were doing in 1907. In a letter to Grave in 1902 he had pointed out that if the anarchist party made syndicalism the main object of its propaganda it would lose the meaning of its existence. He had reservations about the reformist elements in the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) and Guillaume's association with them. He disliked the vision of a society narrowly based on workers' organisations. By 1906 in the wake of the crushing of the general strike in Russia he had admitted that this was a tactic which would not achieve a great deal.[106]

He did not take part in the Congress of Amsterdam in 1907 when Monatte made his famous speech about the main principles of revolutionary syndicalism as they had now been developed and Malatesta made his equally famous reply complaining that anarchists were turning syndicalism, which was essentially only a means, into an aim. Kropotkin must have been in substantial agreement with Malatesta but did not openly criticise the position adopted by the Congress; in spite of his doubts he remained sympathetic to revolutionary syndicalism. His faith in the importance of the labour movement in the struggle against capital remained unshaken. 'The union [*syndicat*] is absolutely necessary. It is the only form of workers' grouping which permits the direct struggle to be maintained against capital without falling into parliamentarism,' he insisted in his letter to Bertoni in March 1914.[107]

CONCLUSION

Sympathetic but uncomprehending liberals and socialists have often tended to regard Kropotkin as something of a naïve and impractical idealist. Yet he always maintained that idealism had to be expressed in action – action which should be in conformity with and directed towards the attainment of clearly articulated aims and ideals. He was by inclination, in fact, a man of action, indeed a man ever impatient for action, who, in spite of a tendency like most revolutionaries of the time to underestimate the strength of the capitalist state, had an informed and often astute grasp of contemporary politics. Nettlau was nearer the truth when he remarked that in comparison with Reclus, Kropotkin's anarchism seemed 'harder, less tolerant, more disposed to be practical', and his defects, as Nettlau's implies, were actually those of the uncompromising yet sophisticated and skilled agitator.[1]

The European anarchist movement which emerged from the Anti-authoritarian International at the end of the seventies was faced with an incredibly difficult situation. As well as an increasing hostility between itself and the rest of the socialist movement there was an intensification of government persecution in response to anarchist agitation and insurrectionary activity. It also had to contend with a demoralisation in its ranks leading to the withdrawal of Guillaume and Schwitzguébel from active involvement and the defection, first of Costa and Brousse, then later Gautier, Bernard and Liégeon. Kropotkin undoubtedly played an important and generally constructive role in this situation.

When he arrived in Europe after his escape from Russia – a bakuninist involved in the Russian revolutionary movement but cut off from the Anti-authoritarian International during critical years of its development – Kropotkin concerned himself with revolutionary action rather than theory. It was only when he became convinced that the suc-

cess of revolutionary agitation amongst the masses in Western Europe depended on anarchists being able to present a clearly defined aim to the people quite distinct from that of the state socialists, that he began to take an active part in discussions of anarchist theory. And in keeping with his earlier development, sensitive to the division of opinion in anarchist circles and the various arguments this represented, it took him some time to come to the conclusion that the Anti-authoritarian International should commit itself to anarchist communism. Having done so he played an important role in the discussions leading to the decisions at La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1880 although it was Cafiero whose eloquent exposition of the arguments secured a general acceptance of the principles of anarchist communism at the Congress itself. But, if at this stage Kropotkin did not contribute very much to the development of anarchist communist theory, it was during the early eighties that he first expressed the idea which provided the basis for his later very influential writings, namely that the first essential task of the revolution was to provide food and shelter for all. Moreover, he was probably largely responsible for the eloquent expression of anarchist communist ideas at the Lyon trial in 1883 which had such an effect in popularising the constructive image of anarchism during a period of persecution.

As regards Kropotkin's ideas and role in developing the approach to revolutionary action in the anarchist movement it is clear at the outset that the true nature of his contribution here has been obscured by the tendency to identify them with the advocacy of propaganda by deed. In fact, although he always attached a great deal of importance to the idea of heroic acts of self-sacrifice to encourage the development of the popular spirit of revolt, he never really subscribed to the notion of 'propaganda by deed' as it was developed either by Brousse or the Italians and certainly not as it emerged from the proceedings of the London Congress. For him an act undertaken either as a lesson in anarchist ideas or as a publicity stunt was both morally and tactically bankrupt, particularly when it only reflected anarchist ideas in a simplistic and destructivist sense – serious revolutionary action had to be the natural and necessary expression of a clear revolutionary anarchist commitment, even though it might be undertaken with no real hope of success. He actually rejected the notion that the masses could not grasp revolutionary ideas at the theoretical level, and even though he argued that the people's understanding and appreciation of the anarchist message needed to be developed through the example of

the revolutionary action of minorities, he nonetheless insisted that the example would have no meaning or attraction for the people, unless it was fired by the genuine intention to revolt, nor would it lead to a real social revolution unless the deed itself clearly reflected the aims of that revolution. Kropotkin did not fall in comfortably with the current of 'propaganda by deed' as has been claimed by D'Agostino in his study of marxism and the Russian anarchists.[2] Nor did he, because of his uncompromising populism, allow himself to be carried along with it as Fleming has argued in a recent study of 'propaganda by deed'.[3] The problem is that he refused to denounce 'propaganda by deed' because of the fear that such a denunciation would be interpreted as a condemnation of acts which though genuine acts of revolt had been *wrongly described* as 'propaganda by deed'. In point of fact, however, a discussion of propaganda by deed in itself does not take us very far in a meaningful examination of the development of Kropotkin's ideas of revolutionary action, if only because it was in any case a vague notion meaning different things to different people – perhaps more important as a slogan than as a very precise description of anarchist ideas of revolutionary action.

Kropotkin's approach when he arrived in Western Europe after escaping from Russia in 1876 seems to have been very much the product of an interaction between his experiences as a bakuninist and member of the Chaikovsky Circle in Russia and it took him some time to adjust his ideas constructively to the realities of the situation. He expected and sought in fellow internationalists that almost superhuman idealism, dedication and revolutionary energy which had characterised the chaikovskists, and inspired by his earlier experiences of the IWA looked to it as a movement which would promote those preliminary revolutionary outbreaks which he thought would lead to a popular revolution. At this stage, unlike other bakuninists, particularly those of the Jura, Kropotkin had serious reservations about trade unionism, so that although he envisaged revolutionary action primarily in terms of collective and mass action it was action promoted by the IWA as a revolutionary rather than trade union based movement. His first encounters with the labour movement in 1876, particularly that in England, exacerbated rather than allayed his anxieties about trade unionism. At the same time the relatively disappointing performance of the internationalists with regard to the Benevento affair and the Berne demonstration combined with the demoralisation and apathy which was creeping into the ranks of the International particularly in

the Jura, undermined his confidence in the possibility of the latter promoting preliminary outbreaks.

Depressed as he was by the current situation, it is not surprising that his interest and sympathy were aroused by the assassination attempts of 1878–9 and that he welcomed them, in spite of their political connotations, as spontaneous acts of protest arising out of mounting popular hatred of oppression which could help build up the spirit of revolt. But even as Kropotkin's attention was being drawn towards the individual act of revolt his anxieties about trade unionism had undergone some modification as a result of particular events and experiences. The Pittsburg strikes of 1877 had enabled him to recognise some real revolutionary potentiality in trade union action and organisation whilst his visit to Spain in the same year had not only given him a new hope and enthusiasm about the International, it had also enabled him to envisage the labour movement as a real base for the revolutionary international. By 1879, his ideas clarified partly by these experiences and his study of the French Revolution, and with the prospect of a reviving labour movement in France influenced by revolutionary socialist ideas, he was beginning to develop an approach to revolutionary action which envisaged two forms of action, one which was more individual and the other essentially collective and depending on a radicalisation of the labour movement. However, in the first clear exposition of his views on this question in the discussion document he prepared for the Jura Federation, *L'Action anarchiste au point de vue de sa réalisation pratique*, he insisted that anarchist action should have its own distinctive character, i.e. as being directed towards popular expropriation, and be as broad ranging as possible, focussing on the activities and concerns of the communes both in the towns and countryside, inside and outside the trade unions. Clearly, Kropotkin, in his anxiety to promote anarchist revolutionary action as a viable and effective alternative to parliamentarism, was responding sympathetically but not uncritically to all forms of contemporary protest, both individual and collective. In fact in his anxiety that revolutionary action should be inspired by the ideas of popular expropriation he began to advocate anarchist–communism as the nearest and most unequivocal expression of that ideal.

During 1880–1, profoundly moved by the activities of the narodniks and the response of the ruling classes, he developed an increasing interest in *attentats* even where they were political. Nevertheless, even in the case of the killing of the Tsar he continued to insist on the need

for such action to be associated with economic terrorism and firmly resisted the destructivist obsession with violence which had inspired Cafiero's article 'L'Action' of December 1880. Moreover, always hostile to the idea of a tight conspiratorial organisation and influenced by Reclus' preoccupation with spontaneity and the individual he stressed the importance of isolated acts which were spontaneous rather than the product of any elaborate conspiracy, and insisted on the catalystic role of anarchists in identifying with the popular struggle and promoting a proliferation of such acts of revolt. At the same time his interest and concern with the collective struggle in the labour movement continued. Setbacks to anarchist influence in the French trade union movement, however, culminating in the adoption of the Minimum Programme at the Congress of Le Havre in November 1880, encouraged him to turn his attention to the possibilities of developing the direct struggle against capital as a positive alternative to parliamentarism and to the influence of parliamentarism in the labour movement. In 1881 therefore, taking as his models the Irish Land League on the one hand and the Spanish anarchist movement on the other he began to advocate a combination of individual and collective revolutionary action which was economic rather than political and based on an 'Internationale Gréviste' organised for violent sıtrikes and economic terrorism.

These ideas however, which he outlined in discussions with leading militants prior to the London Congress of 1881 called to rally the beleagured forces of the anarchist International, seem to have found little support. Indeed a division of opinion over the issue of organisation opened up in the '*intimité*' of the International between Malatesta and Kropotkin which was to deepen over the years. Kropotkin advanced the revival of the IWA as an open revolutionary organisation associated with a very small secret international grouping and committed to the economic struggle against capital. Malatesta, however, urged the necessity for an International conspiratorial organisation to promote insurrectionary action against governments. It is actually not altogether surprising that Malatesta rejected the proposal for an *Internationale Gréviste* for it probably had little immediate relevance to Italy where there was a tradition of insurrectionary organisations rather than any sort of radical trade unionism, and it could be argued that Kropotkin's thinking was too narrowly focussed on the experience of the Spanish and French sections of the movement. On the other hand, the anarchist movement was actually developing

along different lines in different countries so it was probably impractical in any case to arrive at more than a rather loose understanding at the international level. Unfortunately, the differences between Malatesta and Kropotkin prevented them from organising any real united front against the destructivists. To what extent it would have been possible to limit the influence of the latter is uncertain. The general feeling of the Congress was unsympathetic to any 'cooler' and broader view of preparation for revolution. The successful assassination of Alexander II had undoubtedly generated an enthusiasm for violent deeds: the anarchists, often with only the most informal organisation network, faced mounting persecution particularly in Germany which was tending to leave them with little practical alternative to desperate and revengeful acts of violence by isolated individuals and small groups. For all that, however, it does seem possible that these two remarkably able revolutionaries could have exercised a more effective and constructive influence if they had been able to work more closely together (as Kropotkin had in fact originally hoped).

The Congress of London was clearly an unhappy experience for Kropotkin. On the one hand he had failed to secure the support of the '*intimité*' of the International for his approach to revolutionary action, on the other he had failed to make much impression on the obsession of delegates with indiscriminate violence and the bomb, and actually ended up giving a confused impression of exactly where he stood on the question of revolutionary action as a result of the compromise resolutions which emerged from the Congress proceedings. Kropotkin, however, did not restrict his attempt to promote his ideas of revolutionary action to the Congress. In two series of articles in *Le Révolté*, 'L'Esprit de révolte', May–July 1881 and 'L'Organisation ouvrière', December 1881, he gave a clear exposition of his views.

In 'L'esprit de révolte', basing himself largely on evidence from the French Revolution, he argued that it was broad ranging heroic action both collective and individual, of revolutionary minorities which would build up people's spirit of revolt and that it was the ideas of the most energetic of those minorities which would influence the people during the revolution, that it was the sustained economic action of the peasants which had secured the final abolition of feudalism in 1793 and that it was economic rather than political agitation which would ensure that the people would not again be betrayed by the bourgeoisie and denied a real social revolution as they had been in the revolution of 1789. In L'organisation ouvrière' (a series of articles which seem to

have been more or less forgotten) Kropotkin addressed himself specifically to the labour movement.[4] Urging the need for an international association of trade unions for strike action he argued that the IWA as an 'Internationale Gréviste' had in its early years elaborated the broad principles of modern socialism, whilst strikes were an obvious means of developing the direct struggle with capital in preparation for revolution. He saw a proliferation of militant strikes often involving a violent confrontation with the forces of the state, as a means both of developing the popular spirit of revolt and spreading the socialist idea.

If Kropotkin stressed the role of heroic minorities in the preparation for revolution and now clearly envisaged the involvement of anarchists in acts of terrorism he was equally concerned with the idea of the *Internationale Gréviste* to develop the direct struggle of the masses against capital. Moreover, however much he stressed spontaneity and the need to identify with the popular struggle, he nonetheless expected anarchists to encourage and take part in revolutionary action which was directed towards popular expropriation rather than the overthrow of governments or simply revenge on officers of the state. At the same time, disturbed by the narrow preoccupation with violence and dynamite generated by the like of Serraux and Most, he continued to urge on the movement a broad approach where every possible opportunity for developing all sorts of revolutionary action was fully exploited.

Undoubtedly there was some positive response to this within the anarchist movement. Kropotkin himself was particularly excited about developments in South Eastern France. The Jurassians and the Lyonnais understood and agreed with Kropotkin's ideas of economic terrorism and the need to radicalise the unions. But they never really showed interest in the concept of an 'Internationale Gréviste', as we have seen the Lyon movement actually rejected it. In fact in response to persecution and the increasing influence of the parliamentary socialists in the labour movement, it was the destructivist approach which was tending to prevail among the French-speaking anarchists. The Lyonnais, if interested in economic terrorism as expressed in the activities of La Bande Noire, tended to make little distinction between acts directed against authority and the bourgeoisie, they were equally enthusiastic about the acts of Florian and Fournier and clearly had some connection with the bomb attack on the Assomoir. The Jura Federation was perhaps an exception to the general tendency, but the Jurassians were so demoralised by the lack of support that they had been reduced to virtual inaction, and they failed to respond even when

Kropotkin made eloquent efforts to restore morale and energy by reassuring them of the effectiveness of the role of minorities in the face of the charge of their erstwhile comrade Brousse, that the uncompromising position of the anarchists was rendering them totally ineffective.

But if Kropotkin only succeeded in having a limited influence on the approach to revolutionary action in the French-speaking movement, his role in the Lyon trial lifted anarchist communism above the destructivist approach and verbal violence which was tending to engulf it and enabled him to present the persecution as an abortive attempt by the government to suppress the first signs of revolt which would only inflame the revolutionary spirit of the oppressed.

Insofar as the anarchist movement survived the persecution in France, Kropotkin's assessment of the situation proved to be true. But, in fact, deprived of its leading militants and with its organisation network, such as it was, completely fragmented, the movement had suffered a severe setback. The mood amongst the most active sections became desperate and propagandists particularly in Paris and above all Lyon did little more than advocate every possible act of violence against the bourgeoisie and the interest in economic terrorism deteriorated into *la reprise individuelle.* On the level of mass action anarchists certainly took a leading part in demonstrations of the unemployed but preoccupied with the spontaneous rather than organised action of the oppressed they made little serious effort to involve themselves in trade unions and never seem to have prepared the ground in areas of unrest for exercising the influence they expected to exercise on spontaneous strikes and protests.

They were, of course, encouraged in all this by developments in the German-speaking movement which in Austria and Germany was embarking on a struggle of indistriminate violence against the ruling classes involving both political and economic terrorism – but the economic terrorism of *la reprise individuelle* undertaken to provide funds for the struggle and to accustom the people to the idea that private property should be the property of all. In August 1883 the Jura Federation, whilst insisting on the primacy of the economic struggle against capital, declared for 'propaganda by deed' in a way that could be interpreted as support for *la reprise individuelle*, and in December 1883 *Le Révolté*, attracted by the apparent dynamism of German revolutionaries which contrasted with the French preoccupation with violent words rather than deeds, expressed sympathy for the German

approach. Under Grave's editorship, however, *Le Révolté* if prepared to condemn the Spanish movement for their failure to support the *Mano Negro*, clearly became increasingly anxious about the developments in the German-speaking movement and their impact on anarchists in France. Finally, in 1885 Grave took a firm and uncompromising stand against *la reprise individuelle* and verbal violence which he declared threatened to transform the movement into an organisation of petty criminals rather than serious revolutionaries. Meanwhile, *Le Révolté* continued its polemics against the evil effects of the socialists on the labour movement and strikes, and in 1884, persistently optimistic about the revolutionary possibilities of the bitter strikes of the period, it urged on the anarchists the need for a more systematic and long-term attempt to influence the workers' action in industrial centres.

When Kropotkin came out of prison in 1886 he was deeply disturbed by the inadequacies of the anarchist movement in face of the immense task of combating the reformist influences of parliamentarism. He undoubtedly shared Grave's anxieties about the way the movement was now preoccupied with political terrorism on one hand and a form of economic terrorism which had deteriorated into a series of particularly violent murders in Germany and Austria and *la reprise individuelle* in France. He therefore seems to have seen his immediate task in terms of trying to divert the anarchists from the morally murky waters into which they had drifted. But rather than attack his comrades as Grave had done he endeavoured to promote a clearer idea of popular expropriation among them and to persuade them to think in terms of action which was consistent with that idea.

He actually made little if any reference to trade unions and strikes at this time, apparently in the belief that violent strikes could only be transformed into something more than acts of desperation where there was already some understanding of the idea of expropriation. He appears to have dropped the idea of the *Internationale Gréviste* ('L'organisation ouvrière' for instance was not included in *Paroles d'un révolté*), probably as a response to the realities of the situation; he seems to have realised that the almost obsessive dislike of formal organisation had produced a movement, which, isolated as it was from the labour movement by the influence of the social democrats, had no hope and no interest in developing any sort of 'Internationale Gréviste'. Both Kropotkin and Grave, when they later wrote about this period of isolation of the anarchists from the labour movement, insisted that it

had been necessary to establish their revolutionary position vis-à-vis the parliamentary socialists. This is not quite the weak apology it seems, for to have continued for instance inside the POF-dominated labour movement would have implicated the anarchists in the reformism of the guesdists without enabling them to establish an alternative to parliamentarism – after all, even where they attempted to influence trade unions their efforts had created dissension rather than any real change of approach. Certainly, it does seem that anarchists did not, as *Le Révolté* had urged, really exploit situations where worker–employer relations were particularly disturbed so as to be able to influence the course of events when active conflict developed. But in fact the possibilities were very limited for the situation does ot really seem to have been favourable to the promotion of the idea of direct struggle against capital – economic recession made it difficult for trade unions to achieve very much by the costly tactic of strikes, and parliamentary tactics which had not yet been discredited and did not put the workers at risk, clearly seemed to offer more hope of success.

Kropotkin, inhibited though he may have been at this time by the prevailing mistrust for trade union activity and formal organisation, had not changed his view about the importance of trade unionism and its revolutionary possibilities when uncontaminated by parliamentarism, and he was one of the first to respond to the new spirit of independence and militancy in the labour movement in England and France at the end of the eighties. This continuity between Kropotkin's approach in the early eighties and his advocacy of a more active involvement in trade unionism in 1889 has not been recognised by the commentators. Miller, for example, argues that an ambivalence and anxiety about terrorism finally led Kropotkin in the early nineties to turn to the syndicalist movement, the new opposition trend, as a way out of the dilemma posed by terrorist acts.[5]

Kropotkin, of course, as Miller has conceded, was no more a passionate syndicalist than he was a passionate advocate of political terrorism. He never saw trade union activity and strikes, however militant they might be, as *the* way to start revolution, nor, in spite of his nostalgic enthusiasm for the IWA in its early years, did he see trade union organisation as the basis for the organisational forms of anarchist communist society as the Jurassians and bakuninists had done. But that does not necessarily mean, as D'Agostino has suggested, that only when pressed did he concede that trade unions could play an important role in the revolutionary struggle.[6] On the contrary Kropotkin always

insisted on the importance of the labour movement in the struggles leading up to the revolution.

Similarly commentators have adopted a somewhat confused view of Kropotkin's approach to terrorism. They have described terrorism supported and inspired by anarchists as political and have associated Kropotkin, certainly at this period, with political terrorism. Ulrich Linse, for example, in his otherwise interesting study on terrorism and the anarchist movement, has declared that anarchist terrorism was political and that political violence became the substitute revolution for the anarchists.[7] Similarly, Marie Fleming in her study of 'propaganda by deed' has written: 'it might be argued that anarchist theory and political terrorism not only were not opposed but in fact they were coming to complement each other.'[8] Certainly the preoccupation with terrorism did not help the anarchists develop either their principles or their association with the masses. And indeed it might be true that in some sense, as Linse has suggested, the anarchists, in resorting to terrorism, were making a desperate attempt to escape the isolation from the masses into which they had been sidetracked by parliamentary socialism. But, as we have seen, particularly in Germany and Austria, terrorism was not narrowly political, in fact it tended to be directed broadly against the whole oppressor class, namely the bourgeoisie. Kropotkin himself even though he did not condemn political terrorism, thought it a tactic which was not essentially anarchist and instead advocated economic terrorism – but not economic terrorism that had degenerated into class violence. And anxious to counteract debasement of the anarchist ideal by action which was either political or frankly destructivist, he endeavoured to promote a clarification of anarchist communist ideas and their relationship to action. Maybe his approach was not generally understood at the time of the London Congress and even then it was not entirely accepted. During the very difficult period 1883–6, however, terrorist ideas did not engulf the anarchist movement outside Germany and Austria, and it was able to re-emerge with a more positive approach at the end of the decade.

Kropotkin's image has been clouded by a tendency to confuse his views with the class terrorism and the anti-syndicalist ideas of the more extreme individualist and violent members of the anarchist movement in these early years. In fact he was never narrowly or uncritically concerned with either terrorist or syndicalist tactics, but appreciated the value of both. His approach was a very broad one in which he sought out every means of pressing forward with the struggle to establish an

anarchist communist society which was consistent with that ideal. It expressed itself most particularly in his activity as a propagandist where perhaps the nature and importance of his contribution to the development of the movement at this time, if recognised, has not been fully appreciated.

At the end of the seventies the French-speaking anarchist movement faced a series of setbacks to its propaganda effort as a result of the deepening rift with other parts of the socialist movement and the intensification of persecution. The *Mirabeau* in Belgium emerged from a period of internal squabbles only to fold up in 1880. Attempts to provide a lively alternative to the rather dull and cautious *Bulletin* had come to grief with the suppression of *L'Avant-Garde* whilst the *Bulletin* itself had finally ceased publication. At the same time there was some demoralisation amongst propagandists because of the failure to get the sort of sustained popular response and support they had hoped for. Kropotkin's skilful and energetic response to the situation actually carried the movement through a critical period, ensuring, with the success of *Le Révolté*, that at the very least the anarchists could not be dismissed as a lunatic fringe.

The great strength of *Le Révolté* was the fact that not only did it succeed in evading repression whilst continuing to disseminate revolutionary ideas but it also managed to secure a high readership as a direct result of the approach to propaganda which Kropotkin developed. In the first place he presented revolutionary ideas in comparatively moderate language so as to avoid giving the authorities an easy excuse to suppress the paper. Secondly, recognising the need to encourage rather than simply preach at the oppressed about the wrongs they endured, he concentrated on pointing out the signs of the times which indicated that not only was a fundamental change in society already beginning but that, in spite of setbacks, there was an imminent possibility of successful social revolution if the workers committed themselves to the struggle. Thirdly, he did not flinch at the task of getting radical and even sophisticated ideas across to the workers, and sensitive to their strengths and weaknesses, he presented anarchism in a way which was at once comprehensible and meaningful to them. The following comment about communicating ideas to village people illustrates this very well.

> The Great Russian peasant perfectly well understands the educated man's talk, provided it is not stuffed with words taken from foreign languages. What the peasant does not understand is abstract notions when they are not illustrated by

> concrete examples. But my experience is that when you speak to the Russian peasants plainly, and start from concrete facts, – and the same is true with regard to village folk of all nationalities, – there is no generalisation from the whole world of science, social or natural, which cannot be conveyed to a man of average intelligence, if you yourself understand it concretely. The chief difference between the educated and the uneducated man is, I should say, that the latter is not able to follow a chain of conclusions. He grasps the first of them, and maybe the second, but he gets tired at the third, if he does not see what you are driving at. But how often do we meet the same difficulty in educated people.[9]

Finally Kropotkin, imbued with a tireless determination that refused to be shaken in the face of daunting difficulties, ensured that the paper came out regularly, maintaining a steady flow of skilfully presented propaganda unequalled, either inside or outside the anarchist movement at this time, which could not perhaps help but build up a readership sympathetic and responsive to the anarchist view.

Kropotkin appreciated very well the importance of newspaper propaganda and never sought to deprecate it as did the more extreme element who advocated fairly indiscriminate violence particularly after the London Congress. At the same time he recognised its limitations: as has already been pointed out he did not use it to explicitly incite the workers to acts of violence as did the extremists inspired by Serraux because he was conscious of the possibly dangerous consequences both for the paper and the movement in so doing. In his view more explicitly violent and revolutionary propaganda was best undertaken clandestinely in the form of simple pamphlets, leaflets and posters where authors could not be identified, particularly when persecution was increasing and it was difficult for newspapers to avoid suppression. He also thought that the more simple direct form of propaganda in pamphlets, leaflets and posters was more appropriate to the rural population which, partly because it was less sophisticated and literate than that of the cities, tended to be less responsive to revolutionary newspapers.

His approach to propaganda was actually both broad ranging and imaginative. He recognised that there were all sorts of opportunities in the events of the everyday life of the workers which could be used effectively to make propaganda and indeed this partly explains the preoccupation with the affairs of the local communes, even during election campaigns, during the late seventies. He also realised that there were an infinite number of ways of making propaganda apart from the more obvious ones of speeches at meetings and articles in newspapers,

whether it was engaging workers in convivial conversation in cafés, organising some sort of comic satirical event on the street or engaging in a public gesture of symbolic protest like the burning of effigies.

Unfortunately in spite of his efforts Kropotkin found it difficult to persuade comrades, even in the Jura or South Eastern France, to embark on such a programme of propaganda. The Swiss were too demoralised to actually do very much at all, and by 1882 he had felt constrained to point out to the Jura Federation that the state socialists were much more systematic, enterprising and efficient in their propaganda effort. The Lyonnais were much more energetic than the Jurassians but they clearly failed to appreciate the need to restrict verbal violence to clandestine leaflets. Nevertheless the conduct of the anarchists at the Trial of Lyon does seem to have marked something of a triumph for Kropotkin's style of propaganda which prevented the movement from being engulfed by the somewhat mindless destructivism so characteristic of the mood generated by Serraux and Most. Kropotkin's approach was clearly much more skilful and perceptive than he has often been credit for either by socialists or historical commentators. On the other hand leading anarchists who have spoken highly of Kropotkin's life and work have nevertheless expressed some reservations about his approach and influence – Malatesta and Nettlau, for instance pointed out that it was his very success as a propagandist which was part of the problem, encouraging as it did large sections of the movement in an uncritical acceptance of Kropotkin's ideas, particularly in the latter years of his life.

> When you heard or read him you had to believe that there were no other conceptions of anarchism left and that was not the case. The more beautifully he spoke and wrote the more his total absorption in his ideas challenged contradiction.[10]

Unlike Reclus who Nettlau tells us seemed able in spite of firm personal convictions to meet other ideas halfway, thereby recognising their right to existence, Kropotkin once having arrived at his convictions never really seems to have been able to seriously consider any criticism of them from within the movement, particularly in view of the fact that (as Nettlau explains) 'it was difficult to propose changes to his closely knit work without disturbing the whole'. In consequence he tended to adopt a fairly hard line against any deviation from what he regarded as basic incontrovertible anarchist principles and it could be argued that his influence, in some respects, as well as inhibiting the development of anarchist ideas, was also divisive. Even in the seventies there is some

evidence of this in his somewhat insensitive and heavy-handed approach to the problems of the anarchists in Wallonia although it has to be said in his defence that in this case he was only reflecting the views of Guillaume and the Jurassians. More importantly there is the question of his insistence on the necessity for an exclusive commitment to anarchist communism – an insistence which helped deepen the divide between moderate and extreme elements in the movement as well as between anarchists and other socialists. This had serious consequences in Spain where damaging tensions developed between anarchist communists and those anarchists who in the eighties still clung obstinately to collectivism.

The impact on the anarchist movement of an increasing narrowness and intolerance in Kropotkin's views observed by Nettlau, however, should not be exaggerated. It applied much more to Kropotkin's view of ideals than of revolutionary action where his approach always remained a broad one in spite of his lack of enthusiasm for attacks directed narrowly against the state. With regard to his preoccupation with the elaboration of anarchist communist ideals, this may have fuelled the flames in the collectivist/communist controversy but it did not start the fire. After all as we have seen anarchist communism had emerged as a logical development of bakuninist collectivism in the European anarchist movement without a great deal of help from Kropotkin. Moreover, insistent though he was that anarchist communism must ultimately triumph in the movement, he was very critical of the purism which characterised French anarchist circles and actually appealed for tolerance between collectivists and communists in Spain.

Kropotkin was in point of fact much less sectarian and intolerant than someone like Jean Grave. He always tried to avoid any sort of open conflict with his comrades, preferring when he disagreed with their views to express his criticism in an indirect way. He had countered Brousse's idea about propaganda by deed and communalist politics by presenting alternative views rather than giving his friend the lie direct in debate. He had expressed his reservations about the political terrorism of Russian revolutionaries by insisting on the necessity of agitation among the peasants and highlighting any evidence of populist activity. Instead of condemning verbal terrorism he had urged more systematic and broad-ranging forms of agitation where methods reflected aims. The only occasion during this period when he got involved in heated public debate was the London Congress, and even then he had agreed to compromises which actually obscured the nature of his own views.

Another criticism levelled at Kropotkin concerned what was seen as his irrepressible optimism and tendency to make the revolutionary process whereby an anarchist communist society would be established seem easy and almost inevitable. Malatesta in particular argued that Kropotkin placed a confidence in the possibilities of science and the revolutionary capacities of the masses which, certainly in the latter case, was unjustified. Malatesta was, in fact, profoundly sceptical of the uncompromising populism in Kropotkin's argument that the people, inspired by the action and vision of revolutionary minorities would recognise the anarchist communist ideal as a true expression of their instinctive aspirations and break free from the demoralising effects of oppression to build up a new society on communist–anarchist lines. For Malatesta, as indeed for others, this represented an uncritical and idealistic view of the people which was totally unrealistic.

Malatesta's experience as a revolutionary agitator among the masses was much more extensive than that of Kropotkin. At the same time he had always been more on a level with ordinary people where Kropotkin's aristocratic origins and scholarship had tended in some sense to set him apart from them. Certainly, this is true of his early experiences in Russia and even to some extent of his later activities in Europe. The strength of Malatesta's criticism of Kropotkin for a lack of realism and undue optimism regarding the revolutionary capacities of the masses therefore has to be acknowledged. Kropotkin, however, did not have an entirely uncritical and idealistic view of the people. Take for instance the following reply he penned in 1896 to his friend Georg Brandes, the distinguished Danish critic who had reproached him for his absolute faith in the wisdom of the people.

> You say you are struck by my absolute faith in the wisdom of the people. Absolute is perhaps too strong . . . without giving myself the least illusion about the men of the people, without imagining them better than the educated minorities – I have also been struck by the good moral sense of popular decisions (in the village in a group and so on) when these men only have to deal with questions they understand. And in the end, when you get right to the bottom of what great thinkers have written, you discover that at the bottom they have only, (in their best work), expressed the ideas, aspirations and ideals which existed in a vague way among the people.
>
> The people are capable of making great mistakes. Such as when they acclaim a Napoleon or a Boulanger . . .
>
> I have learnt so much from the people, so much from simple workmen who could barely write, so much from simple Russian peasants, and if you put yourself with

them on a footing of . . . I cannot describe it, not camaraderie, nor equality but perhaps simplicity – at every turn in life you are struck by this good sense. There is in the masses a different spirit from that you find in each individual. To grasp this spirit, express it, and analyse it is perhaps the best service one can render to humanity.[11]

This is certainly a bold claim to make about the collective good sense and perception of the people but it was based on real, practical, experience of working with peasant and working-class communities in Russia and did include recognition of popular susceptibility to the wiles and machinations of unscrupulous politicians – a recognition which finally led him to disavow the German people for collusion with the capitalist state in the 1914–18 war. Like Malatesta he was aware of the demoralising influence on the masses of centuries of oppression and corruption by the state and possessing classes. He expressed anxiety, for example, about the danger of a negative preoccupation with terror by the people in the revolution and his argument with Cafiero illustrates the strength of his dislike for anything that might encourage the transformation of popular anger into a war of retribution and extermination against the bourgeoisie. It may be that he tended to exaggerate the opportunities for making effective propaganda but he never actually tried to minimise the difficulties faced by anarchist propagandists, particularly during the pre-revolutionary period. When he discussed the problem of coping with workers' prejudices in the labour movement in 1890 he expressed the need for patience on the part of propagandists pointing out the difficulties even anarchists experienced in shaking off the influence of statist conditioning.[12]

In spite of his shortcomings Kropotkin's response to the very serious problem facing the European anarchist movement in the eighties was generally constructive, and notably in the case of the French-speaking sections helped it survive and develop in spite of the setbacks associated with repression and conflict with the socialists. Perhaps it could even be argued that had the movement been more responsive in these early years to his approach to revolutionary action it could have been more effective in the struggle to counteract the influence of parliamentarism.

The final word must rest with Malatesta.

I do not think my strictures on him can diminish Kropotkin, the person, who remains, in spite of everything one of the shining lights of our movement.

If they are just, they will serve to show that no man is free from error, not even when he is gifted with the great intelligence and the generous heart of a Kropotkin.

In any case anarchists will always find in his writings a treasury of fertile ideas and in his life an example and an incentive in the struggle for all that is good.[13]

NOTES

PREFACE

1 *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France, des origines à 1914*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1975).
2 David Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism – A Study of the Political Activities of Paul Brousse within the First International and the French Socialist Movement 1870–1890* (London, 1971). For other biographies, see bibliography.
3 *The Anarchist Prince. A Biographical Study of Peter Kropotkin* (New York, 1950).
4 Natal'ia Mikhailovna Pirumova, *Petr Alexseevich Kropotkin* (Moscow, 1972). See review by Martin A. Miller in the *Russian Review*, vol. 33, April 1974, pp. 210–11.
5 *Kropotkin* (Chicago and London, 1976).
6 Memoirs of a Revolutionist (1899), ed. with introduction and notes by Nicholas Walter (New York, 1971), p. 275.

INTRODUCTION

1 *Studi Sociali*, 5 April 1935.
2 'La Croisade contre la Science de M. Bergson', *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 25 October 1913. Kropotkin was particularly incensed by Bergson's treatment of biology in his book *L'Evolution créatrice* (1907). See letter to Bertoni, 5 September 1913, IISG (Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam). His criticism, however, was directed more properly to the anti-rational, spiritualist religiosity Bergson's philosophy inspired than to the philosophy itself.
3 Letter, 6 December 1859, in *Petri Alexsandr Kropotkiny Peripiska*, ed. N. K. Lebedev (Moscow–Leningrad, 1932), I, p. 169.
4 Letter, 12 January 1903, Nettlau Archive IISG.
5 *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 1894, p. 14.
6 Letter, 5 May 1903. See also letter 23 December 1903, Nettlau Archive IISG.
7 *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 23, February 1888, pp. 161–80.
8 Proceedings of the St Petersburg Society of Naturalists, 1880, vol. XI.

9 Letter to Laudauer, 1903, in Edmund Silberner (ed.), 'Unbekannte Briefe Peter Kropotkins an Gustav Landauer, *International Journal of Social and Economic History* (1977), pp. 115–17.

10 In 1909, after being interrupted by his concern with the aborted revolution of 1907 in Russia, Kropotkin began writing the concluding article to a series of three articles on ethics, the first two of which had appeared in 1905–1906. He decided that before going any further, however, he would need to discuss the question of the darwinian struggle for life and mutual aid in depth and that this would involve a detailed examination of lamarckism. See letter to Mr Skilbeck, 16 November 1909, James Knowles Papers, City of Westminster Public Library. Kropotkin wrote four articles on the influence of the environment on the development and evolution of plants and animals which appeared in *The Nineteenth Century and After* in 1910: vol. 67, pp. 86–107; vol. 68, pp. 58–77, 856–67, 1047–59.

11 *Ethics*, ed. Lebedev (Moscow, 1922), pp. 15–17.

12 Letter to Nettlau, 5 March 1902, IISG.

13 *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, pp. 186–7. In a postscript to the Russian edition of *Paroles d'un révolté* (1919), he was less optimistic about there being no serious problem of scarcity when the social revolution came. See *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets. A Collection of Writings by Peter Kropotkin*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (1927; Toronto and London, 1970), pp. 75–8.

14 See pamphlet by Dr Drysdale (1913). Translated into French it had been originally published in English in *The Malthusian*. See also letter Kropotkin to Paul Robin, 31 August 1879, Kropotkin–Robin Correspondence IISG.

15 *Malatesta; His Life and Ideas*, ed. Vernon Richards (London, 1977), p. 261. Gaston Leval criticised Malatesta's view of Kropotkin in a pamphlet, *Kropotkine et Malatesta* (Paris, n.d.).

16 Letter, Guillaume to Kropotkin, 4 December 1901, quoted by Daline in 'Autour du livre de Kropotkine (d'après les lettres inéditées de James Guillaume)', *Annales historiques de la révolution française*, no. 45 (January–March 1974), p. 386.

1 BAKUNINISM

1 *Memoirs*, p. 290.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 165–7.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 361.

4 See Max Nettlau, 'L'Homme, une vie', *Les Temps Nouveaux*, March 1921.

5 Quoted by Martin Miller in *Kropotkin*, p. 68 from a letter to Alexander Kropotkin, 4 June 1866 in fond 1129 P. A. Kropotkin, Central State Archive of the October Revolution (Moscow).

6 Letter from James Guillaume, 11 July 1911, quoted by V. Daline in 'Autour du livre de Kropotkine (d'après lettres inéditées de James Guillaume)', *Annales historiques de la révolution française*, no. 46, January–March 1974, p. 394.

7 *Memoirs*, p. 13.

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 102–5.

9 *Perepiska*, I, p. 88.
10 Herzen had published an article, 'In three years', in *Kolkol*, February 1878, in which he had applauded the Tsar's announced intention of liberating the serfs. Kropotkin recalls: 'we read with tears in our eyes, the beautiful article by Herzen, "Thou hast conquered Galilean", in which the refugees at London declared that they would no more look upon Alexander II as an enemy but would support him in the great work of emancipation', *Memoirs*, p. 130.
11 *Perepiska*, I, p. 187.
12 Quoted by Miller in *Kropotkin*, p. 56 from Kropotkin's *Dnevnik* (Moscow–Petrograd, 1923), part I, p. 41, and part II, p. 44.
13 Letter to Alexander, 10 March 1863, quoted by Miller in *Kropotkin*, p. 61 from fond P. A. Kropotkin 1129, Central State Archive of the October Revolution (Moscow).
14 *Perepiska*, II, p. 189.
15 *Memoirs*, pp. 222–3.
16 *Ibid.*, pp. 215–17.
17 *Ibid.*, pp. 226–7.
18 *Ibid.*, pp. 238–40.
19 *Perepiska*, II, pp. 219, 221, 241.
20 *Ibid.*, p. 253.
21 *Memoirs*, pp. 274–5.
22 *Ibid.*, pp. 276–7.
23 Nikolai Utin was a supporter of the marxist-dominated General Council of the IWA in London and had taken a leading role in attempts to discredit Bakunin. See Woodford McClellan, *Revolutionary Exiles* (London, 1979), pp. 14, 185–8; also J. M. Meijer, *Knowledge and Revolution* (Assen, 1955), pp. 79 and 101.
24 *Memoirs*, p. 277. Kropotkin's use of the term 'anarchist' is actually anachronistic here for the Jurassians had not adopted it at this stage.
25 *Ibid.*, p. 287.
26 See Max Nettlau, *Der Anarchismus von Proudhon zu Kropotkin 1859–1880* (Berlin, 1929). Marc Vuilleumier cites evidence of this problem regarding Bakunin's behaviour and Guillaume's subsequent anxiety to suppress it to avoid giving the marxists an opportunity of discrediting the Jurassians. See his introduction to *L'Internationale. Documents et souvenirs (1864–1872)* by James Guillaume (1905–1910; new edition Paris, 1985), I, pp. liv–lv.
27 *Memoirs*, pp. 289–92.
28 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 146. Olga Levashova was a less controversial character. See Meijer, *Knowledge and Revolution*, pp. 79 and 101. Kropotkin decribed her as 'the real soul' of the movement in Geneva, 'a most sympathetic Russian lady who was known far and wide amongst the workers as Madame Olga'. *Memoirs*, p. 276.
29 See *La Première Internationale – recueil de documents*, ed. Jacques Freymond (Geneva, 1962), II, pp. 261–5.
30 Freymond, *Recueil*, III, p. 7; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 8.
31 Jacques Freymond and Miklos Molnár have described the Conference of London as a pyrrhic victory for Marx. Illustrating how the constituent groups

of the First International had jealously guarded their autonomy from the beginning, they point out that the London Conference Resolutions threatened that autonomy as none of the resolutions of the previous congresses had done, and that consequently rebellion inevitably spread beyond the bakuninist sections of the IWA. See 'The Rise and Fall of the First International', in *The Revolutionary Internationals 1864–1843*, ed. Milorad M. Drachkovitch (Stanford, California, 1960), pp. 14–20 and 26–9.

32 Freymond, *Recueil*, III, pp. 203–4. Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, pp. 24–5. For a discussion of the letter from the English Federation see H. Collins and C. Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement, Years of the First International* (London, 1965), p. 270.

33 In 1870 Bakunin himself had conceded that the representative system could work at the communal level. '[The people] have a healthy, practical commonsense when it comes to communal affairs. They are fairly well informed and know how to select from their midst the most capable officials, because the public business is conducted under the watchful eyes of the citizens and vitally and directly concerns their daily lives.' Quoted by Sam Dolgoff in *Bakunin on Anarchy* (London, 1973), p. 223, from *Les Ours de Berne et l'Ours de Saint Petersburg* (1870). In 1871 in a letter to an Italian comrade, Celso Cerretti, Bakunin urged the necessity of co-operating with the political parties in Spain to exploit the revolutionary situation there: 'While maintaining our identity, we must, at this time, help the political parties and endeavour to give this revolution a clearly socialist character.' See Dolgoff, *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 219.

34 Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, p. 347, Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, pp. 223–4.

35 Viñas for Spain supported the idea of a Central Commission like Hales but denounced the latter's definition of anarchy. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 115; Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, pp. 54–7.

36 Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, pp. 345–50, Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, pp. 222–5.

37 See 'De l'organisation des services publics dans la société future, rapport par la section bruxelloise', in *Ni Dieu ni maître, anthologie de l'anarchisme*, ed. Daniel Guérin (Paris, 1973), II, pp. 43–53. It was essentially a conciliatory document. At the Congress, De Paepe actually declared: 'To begin with it is necessary to note that in Spain, Italy, the Jura they are followers of anarchy, and that in Germany, England they are followers of the worker State; Belgium wavers between the two tendencies.' Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 223; Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, p. 347. The bakuninists did not call themselves anarchists at this stage but they used a hyphenated version of the word, an-archy, to make it clear that they meant without government, not chaos.

38 Marc Vuilleumier has pointed out that there were special factors in the Jura which made the workers hostile to the democratic system of government there. Incorporated into the canton of Berne in 1815, the Jura had a social structure, cultural tradition and past which put it at odds with the rest of the canton and meant that even the most progressive demands of the radical party were detrimental to the popular interests of the area. As a result the Jurassians tended not to participate in the political struggles of the canton because the

results could only be unfavourable to them. See 'Bakounine et le mouvement ouvrier', in *Bakounine – combats et débats* (Paris, 1979), p. 126.

39 The next congress was to have been held in either Barcelona or somewhere in the Jura. Unfortunately, circumstances rendered this impossible. In Spain the internationalists faced severe persecution whilst the Jurassians were preoccupied with the disaster of Göschenen (27 July 1875) where soldiers opened fire on strikers killing four and wounding ten. (The strikers were workers involved in the building of the St. Gotthard tunnel. They had been demanding a shorter working day because of the appalling working conditions.) See Marianne Enkell, *La Fédération Jurassienne* [Lausanne, 1971), p. 109. The member federations actually agreed to abandon the 1875 Congress at the suggestion of the Spanish Federation because of the persecution being directed particularly against Italian and Spanish socialists. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 95.

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 91 and 103. The German-speaking socialists set up a centralised organisation, the *Schweizerischer Arbeiterbund.*

41 See De Paepe's report to the Congress, Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 97–8; Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, pp. 454–7.

42 The English sent their good wishes but no delegate. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 94. For a discussion of the problems in the English Federation see Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement.*

43 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 106; Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, p. 480.

44 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 102. As editor of the *Tagwacht* Greulich had already published a letter from German-speaking sections of the International which argued that the Congress was not a Congress of the IWA. A similarly critical letter, signed by Greulich and four others on behalf of the section of the International at Zurich, had appeared in *Vorwärts*, the German Socialist Party newspaper. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 88–9.

45 With the transfer of the General Council to New York in 1872 and the repudiation of the Hague resolutions by most of the federations in 1873, the Authoritarian International ceased to have any real existence but it was not finally dissolved until 1876. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 49–50; also Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, pp. 411–12.

46 Portillo (pseudonym for Soriano) one of the Spanish delegates, abstained. He insisted that an amicable rapprochement between different organisations had now been achieved so that the Universal Socialist Congress would serve no useful purpose. At the same time, adamant about not compromising the principles of the International just to attract support, he was suspicious about the idea of creating a new organisation at Ghent which had been raised, though finally rejected at the Congress. See Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, pp. 483 and 495–6; also Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 107 and 109–10. For a report of the Congress of Berne see Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, pp. 454–97; also Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 91–111.

47 Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, pp. 487–8.

48 There were no representatives of the German Social Democratic Party or the *Schweizerischer Arbeiterbund*, whilst the Belgian delegates came from the

anti-statist sections of the Verviers area. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 258; see also Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, p. 525.

49 See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 275. Much had been expected of the Congress – certainly in Belgium; 10,000 Belgian workers apparently marched through Ghent to celebrate the opening of the Congress and nearly 2,000 gathered for the meeting that marked its conclusion. 'In the Socialist World Congress of Ghent the Belgian workers saw a reincarnation of the old international'. Julius Braunthal, *History of the International 1864–1914*, tr. Henry Collins and Kenneth Mitchell (London, 1961), pp. 192–3. Guillaume points out, however, that there were very heated debates during which it became clear that delegates broadly speaking divided into two camps between the statists and anti-statists. *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 267.

50 R. Hostetter, *The Italian Socialist Movement. I: Origins 1860–1882* (Princeton, 1958), p. 368. The moderate current developed around *La Plebe* of Milan. In July 1876 this paper published a moderate programme and in October a meeting held at Milan set up the Lombard federation. See P. C. Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani de Bakunin a Malatesta* (Milan, 1969), pp. 101–2. In a letter to the *Bulletin*, 3 December 1876, Malatesta and Cafiero referred to this group as 'a small unrepresentative group of socialists inspired by personal interests and reactionary objectives who were seeking to make propaganda which called itself gradual and pacific'. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 114.

51 On the issues relating to the state and political action the anti-statists were outvoted – a notable example of this being the resolution for use of political methods which secured twenty-two votes against ten with one abstention. See Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, p. 577.

52 Liebknecht's letter to Engels, 17 September 1877, in *Liebknecht Briefwechsel mit Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels* (Amsterdam, 1963), p. 240; Marx's letter to Sorge, 27 September 1877, quoted by Freymond in *Recueil*, IV, p. 589; see also Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 279.

2 ANARCHIST COMMUNISM

1 Bakunin's speech to the League of Peace and Liberty, September 1868. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, I, pp. 74–5. The original reaction against communism had in fact been inspired by Proudhon's criticism of the early authoritarian socialists like Louis Blanc.

2 'L'Ordre', in *Paroles d'un révolté* (1885), ed. Martin Zemliak (Paris, 1978), p. 88. 'L'Ordre' was first published in *Le Révolté*, 10 October 1881.

3 See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, II, p. 298.

4 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 114; Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, p. 54.

5 'The anarchist party hastened to accept the name that had been given them. They insisted at first on the little hyphen between *an* and *archy*, explaining that in this form, the word an-archy, which was of Greek origin, meant *without authority* and not *disorder*; but soon, they accepted it as it was without giving useless work to the correctors of proofs or a lesson in Greek to their readers.' 'L'Ordre', in *Paroles d'un révolté*, p. 88.

6 Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, pp. 346–7; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, pp. 222–3.
7 Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, pp. 487–8.
8 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 14. Benoît Malon was an ex-communard who had been associated with the Jura Federation but was now attracted to the more reformist line adopted by De Paepe. He took a leading role in the development of the Lombard Federation. The letter had also been signed by Joseph Favre but Guillaume insists that it was Malon alone who drew up the letter.
9 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 178.
10 *Bulletin*, 11 March 1877. This paper was the organ of the Jura Federation edited by James Guillaume. Reclus called himself an anarchist for the first time in a speech at Lausanne in March 1876.
11 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 237.
12 'Basing ourselves on the principles embodied in our statutes, the Jura Federation recognises that the emancipation of the workers is not a local or national but human problem, whose solution is not possible without theoretical and practical cooperation between workers of all countries; that this cooperation must be direct, that is to say the emancipation to which it leads must be the work of the workers themselves, and not the result of a contract, through any sort of compromise with the bourgeois parties made by the mediation of official delegates . . . but, in the existing situation, faced with a movement which whilst apparently proposing the emancipation of labour, only acts to prolong it by means of parliamentarism, the Jura Federation reserves its full freedom of action . . .

As a result it reserves for itself the right to fight not only in its own country but also in the country where the movement can rally the greatest number of workers; and to do so by virtue of its autonomy and right to make propaganda without limitation according to all collectivist and anti-authoritarian principles.' *Ibid.*, p. 234.
13 'The Congress,

Recognising the use of a publication which expounds in full the theoretical and practical programme of anarchist collectivist and revolutionary socialism . . . [i]nvites the members of the Jura Federation and its sections to prepare submissions on the subject for the consideration of the first biennial anarchist meeting which is due to be held.'

See Report of the Congress of Fribourg in *L'Avant-Garde*, 12 August 1878.
14 See *Ni Dieu ni maître*, II, p. 74.
15 Max Nettlau, *Histoire de l'anarchie*, tr. Martin Zemliak (Paris, 1971), p. 142.
16 Guillaume to Kropotkin, 3 August 1912, Microfilm IISG made from letters Fond 410 Lenin Library, Moscow. Varlin's letter is quoted by Guillaume in *L'Internationale*, I, p. 258.
17 The Report of the Congress of Basle, Freymond, *Recueil*, II, p. 67.
18 Guillaume to Kropotkin, 15 December 1912. See also Guillaume's letters 7 and 8 October 1912 and Kropotkin's letters 4 and 6 October 1912. Guillaume had made the same points in a letter of 24 August 1909, quoted by Dolgoff in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, pp. 158–9.
19 'The last time we met at Neuchâtel (September 1874) Cafiero asked me to write a popular resumé of revolutionary socialist ideas which could be used for the propaganda in Italy. I set to work and after a few weeks sent him my

manuscript. He translated it into Italian, and I know that his translation was circulated amongst the groups; but I do not think that it has been printed.' Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 240. This extract is taken from a section dealing with events of December 1874, so the essay must have been written at the end of 1874. When the manuscript was finally published in Switzerland in August 1876, Guillaume points out that a chapter especially destined for the Italians was left out. This chapter apparently contained ideas about practical measures of expropriation and could therefore have inspired discussion of the socialisation of consumption.

20 *Le Réveil*, 7 March 1914. See also Nettlau, *Histoire de l'anarchie*, p. 137. *Il Martello*, the journal of the Marches and Umbria, on 2 September 1876 had declared: 'And just as we support the collective ownership of materials and the instruments of labour, we support the collective ownership of the products of labour; any individual who gives to society according to his capacities must receive from it according to his needs.' See Hostetter, *The Italian Socialist Movement*, p. 363.

21 See Nettlau, *Histoire de l'anarchie*, p. 137. The letter advocating anarchist communism, which appeared 14 May 1876, was a response to the publication 30 April and 7 May of the letter addressed to the meeting of internationalists at Lausanne on 18 March from Benoît Malon and Joseph Favre in support of De Paepe's ideas.

22 The Congress had been unable to meet at Florence as planned because of police persecution. In the middle of the Congress, participants had been forced to flee into the woods to complete their proceedings because of the threat of a police raid. It was a wet day so that the whole proceedings must have been informal and brief. Costa was arrested, as were several others, on his arrival in Florence for the Congress, but he had been able to get his arguments across beforehand either personally or by letter. See Nettlau, *Histoire de l'anarchie*, p. 137. For an account of the Congress of Florence (Tosti) see Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani*, pp. 99–100.

23 *L'Arbeiter Zeitung*, 28 October 1876, quoted by Nettlau in *Histoire de l'anarchie*, p. 141.

24 *Ibid.*

25 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 113–14.

26 The newly established Lombard federation was firmly opposed to insurrectionary methods although they had not adopted the parliamentary tactics of the social democrats. See Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani*, pp. 101–3. In this letter, Malatesta and Cafiero had insisted on the Italian Federation's commitment to the insurrectionary act, *le fait insurrectionel.* See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 114.

27 Nettlau, *Histoire de l'anarchie*, pp. 136–7. 'Dumartheray was born in one of the poorest peasant families in Savoy. His schooling had not gone beyond the first rudiments of a primary school. Yet he was one of the most intelligent men I ever met. His appreciations of current events and men were often prophetic. He was also one of the finest critics of the current socialist literature, and was never taken in by the mere display of fine words or would-be science.' Kropot-

kin, *Memoirs*, p. 419. The Lyonnais workers had a long tradition of radical ideas and activity; in 1853 the *procureur général* had declared, 'The worker of today is a communist and egalitarian just as the bourgeois before 1789 was a philosopher'. Quotation cited by Jean Bruhat, 'Le Socialisme français de 1848 à 1871', in *Histoire générale du socialisme*, ed. Jacques Droz (Paris, 1972), I, p. 520. Some of the members of *L'Avenir* were communards who may have been involved with Bakunin in the revolt of Lyon during the Commune.

28 Nettlau, *Histoire de l'anarchie*, p. 137. The conversation with Dumartheray on which this comment is based took place in May 1927 when the Swiss militant was 85 years old. See Nettlau, *Elisée Reclus, Anarchist und Gelehrter* (Berlin, 1928), p. 189. The *Bulletin* had been unable to publish an account of the Lausanne meeting because of the poor quality of the stenographer's notes. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, I, p. 8.

29 Marie Fleming argues that Reclus played an important part in the formulation of the theory of anarchist communism and its promotion. She claims that the passage in Cafiero and Malatesta's letter of December 1876, relating to the distribution of the product of labour, parallels passages in Reclus' writing. In her view the phrase 'the cooperation of all for the satisfaction of the needs of each being the only rule of production and consumption which corresponds to the principle of solidarity', reflects Reclus' preoccupation with solidarity as a guiding principle of distribution according to need. See Fleming, *The Anarchist Way to Socialism*, p. 138. Certainly there seems to be some truth in this, if we compare the Italian statement with a sentence in Reclus' speech at the Congress of the Jura federation in 1880. 'What is true and just, is that the products resulting from the labour of all belong to all and that each should freely take his share to consume it as he pleases, without any other rule than that which arises from the solidarity of interests and the mutual respect of associates.' Guérin, *Ni Dieu ni naître*, II, p. 109.

30 Brousse, having come from Berne, gave a speech at St-Imier on Saturday 17 February about 'property, and showed the need for the collectivisation of property and consumer goods as well as the instruments of labour, land and machines.' Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 150. 'Paul Brousse (in a talk at St-Imier, 17 February 1877), and Andrea Costa (in the propaganda that he made in Switzerland where he had taken refuge in the spring and summer of 1877) adopted these new ideas . . . ' Nettlau, *Histoire de l'anarchie*, p. 137. Guillaume's account of Costa's speeches in Switzerland however suggests his main concern was propaganda by deed. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 209.

31 Report of the Congress of Verviers. Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, pp. 532–5. Werner was involved with the German speaking group at Berne) Motels, a French communard, was associated with Brousse in the revival of the French Federation of the IWA at the secret meeting at St-Imier in August 1877. See Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism*, pp. 103–4. Brousse himself actually conceded that 'We have to divide the question: immediate and far off', Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, p. 534.

32 Dmitri Klements had abandoned his studies and joined the Chaikovsky Group whilst Kropotkin had been in Europe. See Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, pp. 303–4.

33 To Kropotkin's dismay they sided with the lavrovists in 1873 in the quarrel that had developed between the supporters of Lavrov and Bakunin in Zurich. They did not, however, share Lavrov's continued preoccupation with propaganda addressed to intellectuals and were disappointed in the lavrovists' journal *Vpered*. See P. A. Kropotkin, 'Vospominaniia o Lavrove', *P. L. Lavrov, Stat'i Vospominainiia, Materialy* (Petrograd, 1922), p. 438; also appendix of Kropotkin, *Zapiski Revoliutsionera* (7th edition, Moscow, 1929).

34 Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, p. 307.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 317.

36 'Must we occupy ourselves with an examination of the ideal of a future system?', *Selected Writings of P. A. Kropotkin*, ed. Martin A. Miller (Massachusetts, 1970), pp. 47–116.

37 This Congress 'was especially important, as it was known that an attempt would be made by the German social democrats to bring all the labour movements of Europe under one organisation, subject to a central committee, which would be the General Council of the International under a new name. It was therefore necessary to preserve the autonomy of the labour organisations in the Latin countries, and we did our best to be well represented at this Congress. I went under the name of Levashoff . . . and although we were only 9 anarchists at Ghent we succeeded in checking the centralisation scheme'. Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, p. 404. The social democrats, as we have seen, also thought they had achieved some success at the Ghent Congress. Kropotkin actually had to leave the Congress secretly before the end because of fears of arrest. See Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, pp. 405, 38. Kropotkin, however, had been involved in the formulation of the statutes of the German speaking anarchist communist party at Berne in April 1877. 'The German workers grouped round *Arbeiter Zeitung* wanted to set up a new party, clearly distinct from the *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiter-Partei* of Germany; during April they elaborated the statutes of the party in collaboration with Kropotkin; Kropotkin was charged with putting the common ideas into writing, and he wrote a draft which he sent to Berne at the end of April.' Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 207. The statutes in fact contain no elaboration of anarchist communist ideas. Article one simply states, 'In order to unite diverse elements of the German-speaking peoples who recognise the anarchist communist principle, an anarchist communist party is founded for the German-speaking peoples who are associated with the International Workingmen's Association.' Quoted by A. R. Carlson, *Anarchism in Germany – The Early Movement* (New York, 1972), p. 403.

39 *Le Bulletin*, 29 July 1877.

40 For a discussion of the reasons for Reclus' absence see below, part II, 'Acts of Revolt'. The proceedings of the Congress of Fribourg were reported in *L'Avant-Garde*, 12 August and 9 September 1878.

41 *L'Avant-Garde*, 12 August 1878. As has already been pointed out, the incorporation of the Jura into the Canton of Berne was a cause of continuing frus-

tration to the inhabitants of the Jura. Communal autonomy was therefore a popular issue. Schwitzguébel, who was a founding member of the Jura federation and a leading trade union militant, thought it could inspire a general agitation and provide a practical means of realising anarchist principles.

42 *Ibid.* This is a point he had made in earlier articles in *Le Bulletin* in July 1877. 'Each revolution introduces a new element of the future society. The Paris Commune established one of the most important; the necessity and possibility of complete autonomy for the communes. The revolution toward which we are marching will establish that of the communes without individual property'. *Le Bulletin*, 29 July 1877.

43 Certainly Guillaume as well as Werner and Montels had been anxious not to do this at the Congress of the IWA at Verviers in 1877. Guillaume, however, had left the Jura in the spring of 1878, apparently alienated by the speed of Kropotkin's development towards an advanced anarchist position – a position in his view so in advance of practical realities as to be of no practical interest. See Nettlau's note for a supplement of *Le Réveil*, 1925, Nettlau Archive, IISG. Schwitzguébel was to express anxieties about being able to convince people that the communist idea was not anti-libertarian when anarchist communism was finally adopted at the Congress at La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1880.

44 See the report of the Congress Proceedings in *Le Révolté*, 1 November 1879.

45 *La Plebe*, 16 November 1879. *La Plebe* of Milan was a paper with an eclectic approach which favoured evolutionary socialism.

46 The Genevan section had asked for admission to the Jura Federation in May 1877. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 206. Reclus, Dumartheray and Herzig were involved with Kropotkin in the launching of *Le Révolté*.

47 'La Commune', *Le Révolté*, 1 and 15 May 1880. See also *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 93 and 101. Cf. Reclus' letter to the Congress of Fribourg, 1878.

48 Report, *Le Révolté*, 17 October 1880. For a slightly abbreviated version see Guérin, *Ni Dieu ni maître*, II, p. 110.

49 'La Commune de Paris', *Le Révolté*, 20 March 1880. See also *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 103–10. In his exchange with Costa in November 1879, he had been disturbed by the latter's failure to appreciate the widening theoretical gulf between the anarchists and other anti-authoritarian collectivists who were now tending to abandon the revolutionary position. See *La Plebe*, 16 November 1879.

50 Letter to Max Nettlau, 13 May 1895, in the Nettlau Archive IISG.

51 'Mémoire présenté au Congrès Jurassien de 1880 par la Fédération du district de Courtelary', published as the *Programme Socialiste* (Geneva, 1880). See also Guérin, *Ni Dieu ni maître*, II, pp. 114–19. It was not included in the report of the Congress in *Le Révolté*.

52 Report, *Le Révolté*, 17 October 1880. For a slightly abbreviated version, see Guérin, *Ni Dieu ni maître*, II, pp. 105–26. Kropotkin's sneer about those who called themselves socialist to inhibit the development of socialism undoubtedly refers to the activities of the leading French radical, Georges Clemenceau and the *Alliance Socialiste Républicaine* with which he was associated. At the beginning of 1880, Clemenceau had launched a newspaper,

La Justice, and by means of the publicity given by this paper to eloquent speeches he had made in parliament, he was endeavouring to promote a programme for social justice in a bid to claim leadership of the extreme left. The socialists regarded all this as an attempt to undermine their influence among the working classes. See David R. Watson, *Georges Clemenceau, A Political Biography* (Plymouth, 1974); also Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism*, p. 320. For the contents of Clemenceau's programme, see E. Cahm, *Politics and Society in Contemporary France* (London, 1972), pp. 86–8.

53 In April 1880, Brousse, who by now had virtually abandoned anarchism for reformist socialism, had published an article 'Le Parti Socialiste' in *Le Travail* in which he had urged the need for all socialists to unite around a basic programme of action. See Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism*, pp. 147–8. Malon, the leading French moderate who had begun to co-operate with Lafargue and Guesde for that very purpose, had warmly welcomed the article. In fact a programme was worked out between the latter and Engels and Marx at a meeting in London to which Malon had not been invited and from which Brousse had been excluded. The Socialist Programme had been published in May and had evoked immediate and sharp criticism from the anarchists. See *le Révolté*, 24 July 1880. They regarded it as a reformist-inspired document, apparently attributing its authorship to Malon. (They called it the Zurich Programme in an obvious reference to Malon who lived in Zurich. See *Le Révolté*, 7 August 1880.) *The Minimum Programme*, as it was called, had been discussed at the workers' regional congresses in the summer. In spite of negative reactions in the North and the South, it had been accepted enthusiastically at the Congrès du Centre in Paris.

54 Guérin, *Ni Dieu ni maître*, II, p. 108. The reference to collectivists who wanted to limit the capital to be collectivised seems to refer to the guesdists. According to the report of the discussions at the Congrès du Centre in *Le Révolté*, 7 August 1880, 'the rational collectivists' wanted collectivisation of the means of production, not the product of labour, whilst 'the authoritarians' wanted 'the collective expropriation of the materials and instruments of labour without touching other accumulated capital'. The 'authoritarians' were the members of the *Egalité* group associated with Guesde and one of them, Massard, was involved in bitter and stormy exchanges with the handful of anarchists at the Congress.

55 Cafiero was particularly insistent that even revolutionary socialists failed to recognise the danger here: 'I have heard a famous socialist, a so-called revolutionary, who was supporting the individual ownership of goods end up by declaring that he could see no objection to society allowing the handing down of these goods by inheritance; this according to him was of no consequence.' Guérin, *Ni Dieu ni maître*, II, p. 123. Marx was well aware of the problem regarding the remuneration of labour in the immediate post-revolutionary situation, and he had criticised the Gotha Programme in 1875 for its lack of precision here in simply calling for the equitable distribvution of the product of labour. He had however declared that 'defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society as it has just emerged after prolonged birth pangs from capitalist society'. 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', *Selected Works*,

ed. V. Adoratsky (London, 1942), II, pp. 560–6. This document was not published until 1891 so Cafiero would not have been aware of it. The social democrats at this stage seem to have totally rejected the argument about the impossibility of arriving at an equitable distribution of the product of labour. Indeed the Minimum Programme advocated by the guesdists in France contained no reference to the problem apart from the demand for a minimum wage. Massard had condemned all anarchist arguments relating to property as so much irrelevant rubbish at the Congrès du Centre. See *Le Révolté*, 7 August 1880. The primary objective of the social democrats was the collectivisation of the means of production.

56 Cafiero was responding primarily to objections from those within the movement, or on its fringes, who continued to fear that distribution according to need, particularly during times of scarcity, implied the existence of authoritarian rather than libertarian organisation. Costa, who was now abandoning anarchism for a more moderate socialism, had expressed such fears in his exchanges with Kropotkin in the pages of *La Plebe* in November 1879, in spite of his earlier support for Brousse in championing the communist idea.

57 In the Courtelary programme, trade union organisations within the existing commune were seen as providing the basis for the development of the revolutionary commune. 'The trade unions having been established, it is a matter of organising life at the local level. The instrument of this will be the trade union federation and it is this local federation that will constitute the future commune.' Guérin, *Ni Dieu ni maître*, II, p. 119. A similar view of trade unions also persisted in the Spanish Federation, in articles of Llunas which appeared in 1881 and 1883. See Nettlau, *Histoire de l'anarchie*, pp. 176–7.

58 Letter to Nettlau, 13 May 1895. The blanquists were supportive of the anarchists at Le Havre. Perhaps because both groups were uncompromisingly revolutionary, relations between them tended to be better than those between the anarchists and other socialists. Bordat and Gautier were to become leading activists in the anarchist movement which developed in south-eastern France. Mollin came from Bourges, and his speech particularly impressed the anarchists for it was quoted at length in *Le Révolté*, 27 November 1880.

59 *La Révolution Sociale*, 5 December 1880. See also *Le Révolté*, 27 November 1880. The wording of the report in the latter is perhaps less clear with reference to products: 'The Congress declares . . . that all products must be placed at the free disposal of all for the realisation of anarchist communism, the objective of the Revolution.'

60 Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, p. 533. Viñas spoke at the Congress under the pseudonym of Rodriguez. See letter to Nettlau from Viñas in which he makes it clear that he used the pseudonym at Ghent, quoted by Nettlau in *La Première Internationale en Espagne (1868–1888)*, ed. R. Lamberet (Dordrecht, 1969), pp. 296–7.

61 'And communism as far as Spain is concerned derives from the programme of the Alliance embodied in the words: "All for one, one for all." For if in fact the programme of the Alliance speaks of collective property it also says "ending up by belonging to society as a whole". I have to warn you that when I defended my ideas at Seville to the effect that the product of labour must be

for all in the same way as the land and means of production, and the delegate for Barcelona responded that what I was defending was communism, I replied that if this was communism then I was a communist. This shows that the communist conception in Spain derives from an interpretation of the programme of the alliance just like the collectivist ideal.' See letter from Rubio to Federico Urales, quoted by R. Lamberet in 'Les travailleurs espagnols et leur conception de l'anarchie de 1868 au début de XXe siècle', *Anarchici et anarchia nel mondo contemporaneo* (Turin, 1971), pp. 83–4. Rubio, who had been active in the Spanish Federation since 1872, was described by another prominent Spanish anarchist, Lorenzo, as a 'philosopher, shoemaker, mentor, near-oracle of the revolutionary youth of Seville.' *Ibid.*

62 For an account of the views of Llunas Pujols and his contribution to the Congress of Seville see Nettlau, *L'Histoire de l'anarchie*, pp. 176–7.

63 *Ibid.*, pp. 183–4. For reference to Herzig's stay in Spain see Nettlau, *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre*, pp. 256–8.

64 See Nettlau, *La Première Internationale en Espagne*, pp. 575–6.

65 The first anarchist communist journals, *La Justicia Humana*, 18 April–25 November 1886 and *Terra y Libertad*, 2 January 1888–6 July 1889, published writings of anarchist communists from abroad, particularly France. See Lamberet, 'Les travailleurs espagnols', pp. 84–5.

66 *Le Révolté*, 7 October 1888.

67 See *Programma e organizzazione dell'associazione internazionale dei lavoratori* (Florence, 1884), reprinted in *Studi Sociali*, nos. 29–32 and 34–5 (2 April–10 November 1934). In *Fra Contadini* (Florence, 1884), whilst expressing a clear preference for anarchist communism, he took care not to adopt a hard line about it. In additions to the pamphlet made for the English edition in 1891 in which he discussed the differences between communists and collectivists, he continued to adopt a much less doctrinaire approach than Kropotkin.

68 Reclus set out his views in his article 'Anarchy by an Anarchist', *Contemporary Review*, May 1884, pp. 627–41, and in subsequent correspondence about the article with Richard Heath. He argued that equality of conditions (clearly understood in the anarchist communist sense) was the only means whereby a true public morality could be developed. In a letter to Heath, 6 June 1884, he added: 'The individual changes according to his environment; under oppression I see him artful, lying, cowardly bibulous; under liberty I see him proud, generous, truthful, magnanimous.' *Correspondance* (Paris, 1911), II, pp. 317–19. Although he admitted that the article had not given enough attention to the practical difficulties of the future, there is no suggestion that he recognised the short term problems foreseen by Malatesta. See letter, 6 June 1884, *Correspondance*, II, pp. 313–15. Both in the article and in his correspondence with Heath (ibid., pp. 322–5) he maintained that geographical and statistical evidence showed that there were adequate resources to meet the needs of everybody.

69 'La Commune de Paris', *Le Révolté*, 18 March 1880. See also *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 114–15.

70 'L'Expropriation', *Le Révolté*, 25 November and 23 December 1882. See also *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 237–51.
71 'La grève d'Amérique', *Le Travailleur*, September 1877.
72 'L'Expropriation', *Le Révolté*, 14 February 1886: 'Comment on s'enrichit', *ibid.*, 29 May–3 July 1886; 'La pratique de l'expropriation', *ibid.*, 10 July–17 July 1886. The 1882 articles do not seem to have aroused much immediate interest – they were only translated and published abroad (London, 1886; Cadiz, 1887; Oporto, 1888) after the publication of *Paroles d'un révolté* (Paris, 1885). The 1886 articles were more popular but they were only published outside France in the nineties after the publication of *La Conquête du pain* in 1882. See Nettlau, *Bibliographie de l'anarchie* (Paris and Brussels, 1897), pp. 78–9.
73 'Déclaration des anarchistes accusés devant le tribunal correctionnel de Lyon', *Le Révolté*, 20 January–3 February 1883. See also Guérin, *Ni Dieu ni maître*, II, pp. 227–8.
74 Introduction to E. Pouget and E. Pataud's *Syndicalism and the Cooperative Commonwealth (Comment nous ferons la révolution)* (Paris, 1909).
75 L'Entente', *Le Révolté*, 11–17 April 1891.
76 'L'Insurrection et Révolution', *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 6 August 1910.
77 See 'Les Principes dans la Révolution', *Le Révolté*, 17–24 December 1843; also editorial comment 30 December 1894.
78 'Revolutionary Studies IV', *Commonweal*, 9 January 1891 (first published in *Le Révolté*, 29 August–4 September 1891.

3 THE ANARCHIST MOVEMENT OF THE SEVENTIES

1 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, pp. 146–7. Bakunin's letter appeared in *Le Bulletin*, 12 October 1873.
2 Letter to Celso Cerretti, quoted by Dolgoff in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 219. See also François Muñoz, *Bakounine et la Liberté* (Paris, 1965), p. 226.
3 *Le Bulletin*, March 1873, quoted by Guillaume in *L'Internationale*, III, p. 60.
4 See Temma Kaplan, *Anarchists of Andalusia 1868–1903* (Princeton, 1977), p. 110. The Commune of Paris was obviously a much more significant event in Europe than the revolt of a small place like Sanlucar – but the comparison does give some idea of the local impact of the latter on the consciousness of anarchists.
5 'Lettres à un Français sur la crise actuelle, lettre III', in *Michel Bakounine sur la Guerre Franco-Allemande et la révolution sociale en France 1870–71 Archives Bakounine*, ed. Arthur Lehning (Leiden, 1977), VI, p. 114. See also *Michel Bakounine de la guerre à la commune*, ed. Ferdinand Rude (Paris, 1972), p. 136. (The wording of this version is slightly different.) In the letter to Cerretti, he had actually advocated support for the political parties in the cantonalist risings.
6 'Mémoire Justificatif' (1874), quoted by Nettlau in *L'Internationale en Espagne*, p. 101.

7 Declaration issued by the Federal Commission. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 188.
8 'Etatisme et anarchie' (1873), *Œuvres complètes de Bakounine*, tr. Marcel Body, ed. Arthur Lehning (Paris, 1976), pp. 206 and 226–7.
9 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 189.
10 See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 217. The document was published in *Le Bulletin*, 13 September 1874.
11 *Die Tagwacht* (Zurich), 16 September 1874. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 217.,
12 Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani*, pp. 91–2. The three-day interrogation of Costa in March 1876 was particularly important in this connection. *Ibid.*, pp. 96–7. See also Hostetter, *The Italian Socialist Movement*, p. 355.

4 THE IDEA OF PROPAGANDA BY DEED

1 The actual phrase was apparently first coined by Brousse. He introduced it in an article in *L'Arbeiter Zeitung*, 16 December 1876. Kropotkin described it as Brousse's formula in a letter to Nettlau, 5 April 1876, Nettlau Archive IISG, quoted by Miller, *Kropotkin*, pp. 260–2. Quoted by Hostetter, *The Italian Socialist Movement*, p. 23. Pisacane was a hero-martyr of the Risorgimento. He was very much influenced by the ideas of Proudhon. His own ideas only became known through his writings published after his death. Several old comrades of Pisacane were involved with the Florentine and International Brotherhoods established by Bakunin. See George Woodcock, *Anarchism* (London, 1962), pp. 307–9.
3 'Lettre à un Français', in *Michel Bakounine sur la Guerre Franco-Allemande et la révolution sociale en France, Archives Bakounine*, ed. Arthur Lehning (Brill, London, 1877), VI, p. 51.
4 *La Solidarité Révolutionnaire*, 8 July 1873.
5 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 88.
6 This is certainly the impression he gives in *Letters to a Frenchman*. On the other hand in 1873 he too found it necessary to comment on the revolt that fails: 'But whilst every revolt, even when it fails, may always have its usefulness, isolated actions are nevertheless not sufficient. The whole country must be raised in revolt at the same time.' 'Etatisme et anarchie' (1873), *Œuvres complètes de Bakounine*, IV, p. 376.
7 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 169.
8 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 113–14.
9 *Ibid.*, p. 116.
10 Letter quoted by Hostetter, *The Italian Socialist Movement*, p. 377. Cipriani had fought both for Risorgimento and the Commune of Paris. At this time, he was in exile in New Caledonia. On his return in 1880 he allied himself with the anarchists at the Congress of Chiasso (9 December 1880).
11 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 212. Guillaume was prompted to reflect: 'Did our friends, who had only at the start thought of making an act of propaganda, at some point imagine their movement could provoke a general insurrection?' *Ibid.*, p. 217. In fact there do seem to have been possibilities of

provoking a general rising in the area – the terrain was suitable for guerilla-type warfare and the population was given to brigandage. See Hostetter, *The Italian Socialist Movement*, p. 378.

12 Hostetter, *The Italian Socialist Movement*, p. 386.

13 Quoted in Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism*, p. 79.

14 The letter was published in *Il Martello*, 25 January 1877. It is quoted by Hostetter, *The Italian Socialist Movement*, p. 376. Nicotera was the new Minister of the Interior, thought to have socialist sympathies.

15 Quoted by Franco Venturi in *Roots of Revolution. A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth-century Russia* (1952), tr. Francis Haskell (London, 1960), p. 574.

16 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 139.

17 *L'Avant-Garde*, June 1878.

18 *Le Bulletin*, 26 March 1876.

19 Circular to the French Sections of the International, IISG Amsterdam.

20 'Que faire', *L'Avant-Garde*, 2 June 1877.

21 'La Propagande par le fait', *Le Bulletin*, 5 August 1877. The insurrectionary attempts of Flourens, Barbès and Blanqui were conspiracies in Paris which in 1869 failed to arouse support. Guillaume attributed the article to the joint authorship of Brousse and Kropotkin, although he conceded it could have been written by Brousse alone. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 224. But in fact Kropotkin denied that he was in any way responsible for the article. See the letters to Herzig, 9 and 12 March 1909. As Kropotkin himself pointed out, the references in the article to experience of the last days of the Empire in France can only relate to Brousse. Moreover, the ideas are so close to those Brousse expressed in his article in 1873 for *La Solidarité Révolutionnaire* as to leave no doubt that he was the sole author.

22 See Guillaume's letter to Kropotkin, 27 March 1877, quoted in *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 172 and his subsequent comments on p. 174.

23 Stafford, *Anarchism to Reformism*, pp. 113–14.

24 Report of the Congress in *L'Avant-Garde*, 12 August and 9 September 1878. Brousse was here repeating a phrase from the resolution of the Spanish delegation at the Congress of Ghent in 1877: 'To arrive at a social revolution it is necessary to make insurrectional agitation by deed and propaganda'. Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 276.

25 Blanqui's name was put forward as a parliamentary candidate for Marseille in March and for a constituency in Paris in July 1878. In April 1879 his name was put forward again, this time at Bordeaux, and on this occasion he would secure a majority of the votes only to have his election invalidated as Brousse had foreseen it would be. On 10 March 1878, *L'Avant-Garde* had declared: 'Our friends, although abstentionists, have gone to vote for Blanqui. We congratulate them sincerely for this.' It is interesting to compare this with anarchist hostility to voting for the candidature of Lafargue in 1891!

26 *L'Avant-Garde*, 23 September 1878.

27 'But although the delegates of the Congress are unanimous in pronouncing . . . *against* the vote setting up the regular functioning of the State, but *for* the vote to destroy this mechanism, and for the anarchist and revolutionary vote,

they also all accept the request of companion Kahn for a study to be made of the question.' Report of the Congress in *L'Avant-Garde*, 9 September 1878. Cf. Louise Michel's letter 'La candidature illégale' in *La Révolution Sociale*, 19 December 1880, and Cafiero's article, 'L'Action', in *Le Révolté*, 25 December 1880.

28 'I wish Moncasi had been successful . . . When the execution of one man can result in a better regime and avoid a bloody revolution,I consider there should be no hesitation.' Article in *Le Citoyen*, 22 March 1881.

29 See 'Hoedal, Nobiling et la propagande par le fait', *L'Avant-Garde*, 17 June 1878.

30 'Comment fut fondé Le Révolté', *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 20–6 February 1904. Giovanni Passanante, a cook, stabbed King Umberto I of Italy on 17 November 1878. He was condemned to death but the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. The king was only slightly wounded.

31 *L'Avant-Garde*, 18 November 1878.

32 Rinke, Werner and Reinsdorf had been involved with Brousse and Kropotkin in the drawing up of a programme for a German anarchist communist party in Berne in April 1876. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 207.

33 See *L'Avant-Garde*, 29 July 1878; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 207. Founded about the same time as *L'Avant-Garde*, *Le Travailleur* was much less purist and was sharply criticised by Brousse.

34 Spichiger had been one of the founding members of the Jura Federation who shared Guillaume's cautious approach. Kropotkin described him as 'a philosopher slow both in movement and thought'. *Memoirs*, p. 392.

35 In his letters to Paul Robin during 1878, Kropotkin makes it quite clear that the Federation now had very little support from the watchmakers – certainly in the north. See letters of 4 August and 1 November 1878, Nettlau Archive, IISG Amsterdam. The membership which reached 408 in 1873 had fallen to 126 in 1878. See M. Vuilleumier, 'La Première Internationale en Suisse', *La Première Internationale, l'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement* (Paris, 1968), pp. 247–8. Kropotkin met Robin in London in 1876. The friendship lasted until the early eighties when they quarrelled over Robin's neo-malthusianism. For an account of Robin's life and ideas, see Gabriel Giroud, *Paul Robin, sa vie, ses idées, son action* (Paris, 1968).

36 See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 172.

37 'La Pacte de Solidarité', *L'Avant-Garde*, 15 July 1877.

38 See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 180–1 and 202–3. 'The people of the North are a little less advanced than those of the South, the latter are always wavering. It is clear therefore that they cannot march arm in arm together. However they should not quarrel. The Genevans produce their newspapers, the Northern Jurassians produce theirs; Le Bulletin, l'Arbeiter Zeitung and a newspaper that will be produced in France.' Letter to Robin, 6 June 1877, Nettlau Archives IISG Amsterdam.

39 *L'Avant-Garde*, 29 July 1878. Reclus, who attended the meeting, described it as a 'gathering of friends' in a letter to his brother, adding, 'There were about fifteen of us full of goodwill with respect to one another'. See letter from Elisée to Elie Reclus, 10 June 1878, quoted by Fleming in *The Anarchist Way to Socialism*, p. 136.

40 Pindy was secretary of the French Federation. Whether or not Spichiger involved himself in Pindy's protest, he certainly seems to have more or less abandoned the movement as did Pindy after the suppression of *L'Avant-Garde*. 'Pindy ... has almost formally refused to do anything whatever. There remains Auguste Spichiger who does not bestir himself at all.' Kropotkin's letter to Robin, 10 April 1879, Nettlau Archive IISG. As a matter of fact Spichiger had only been involved with the circulation of *L'Avant-Garde* and even in November 1878 was not interested in anything else. 'Auguste Spichiger takes great care with the sending out of L'Avant-Garde but that is all.' Letter to Robin, 1 November 1878, Nettlau Archive IISG.

41 See Report of the Congress of the Jura Federation at La Chaux-de-Fonds in *Le Révolté*, 17 October 1880. For an account of Schwitzguébel's difficulties, see Kropotkin's letters to Robin, 1 November 1878 and 29 January 1879, Neetlau Archive IISG. He seems to have left the movement soon after, although Kropotkin, in a letter to Malatesta just before the London Congress of 1881, had insisted on the importance of Schwitzguébel attending as a delegate of the Jura Federation. See Kropotkin–Malatesta Correspondence IISG.

42 *Le Révolté*, 10 December 1881. A report from a German propagandist in the wake of the election successes of the social democrats (they lost some support at the elections of 1878 as compared to those of 1877, but they still secured nine seats with 7.5 per cent of the votes cast), indicates the intensification of the campaign against the anarchists. See *L'Avant-Garde*, 12 January 1878.

43 'It is my belief that both the assassination attempts were masterminded by Emil Werner, but that the stimulus for them came from the German section of the Jura Federation in Switzerland.' Carlson, *Anarchism in Germany*, p. 123.

44 See report from the German correspondent (Werner or Rinke?) that Hoedal had no anarchist connections, *L'Avant-Garde*, 3 June 1878.

45 See Kropotkin's article, 'Comment fut fondé Le Révolté', *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 20 February 1904; Brousse's article on propaganda by deed in *L'Avant-Garde*, 3 June 1878.

46 *L'Avant-Garde*, 3 June 1878.

47 See the report of the Congress of Fribourg in *L'Avant-Garde*, 9 September 1878.

48 *L'Avant-Garde*, 3 June 1878.

5 KROPOTKIN AND PROPAGANDA BY DEED

1 Tikhomirov, a member of the Chaikovsky Circle was arrested before he had completed writing the pamphlet: 'I worked for a long time – right up to my arrest – on the Pugachev history, which I did not manage to complete. It was completed it seems, by Kropotkin.' See Miller, *Kropotkin*, p. 93 quoting from Tikhomirov, *Vospominainiia* (Moscow–Leningrad, 1927), p. 75.

2 Quoted by Miller, *Kropotkin*, p. 289. In fact there is some doubt as to whether any agreed version of the manifesto emerged from these discussions before Kropotkin's arrest and the break-up of the Chaikovsky Circle in

March 1874. (Shishko was one of the first of the chaikovskists to undertake a systematic attempt to propagandise the workmen in St Petersburg and Moscow.)

3 Quoted by Miller, *Kropotkin*, p. 106 from N. A. Charushin, 'Neskol'ko slov O P. A. Kropotkine', *Biuleten vserossiiskogo obshchestvennogo komiteta po uvekovechiniiu pamiati P. A. Kropotkina*, no. 1 (1924), p. 18. Charushin was one of the main organisers of the propaganda work in St Petersburg who was arrested at the end of 1873. See Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, p. 513.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 484, quoting from Frolenko, *Sobranie sochineniy* (1932), I, p. 218.

5 'Must we occupy ourselves with an examination of the ideal of a future system?', *Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution by P. A. Kropotkin*, ed. Martin Miller (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1970), pp. 114–15.

6 Kravchinsky described how his lectures 'united a clarity and a simplicity that rendered them intelligible to the most uncultivated minds' and 'excited the deepest interest' of the workers. See S. Stepniak, *Underground Russia: Profiles and Sketches from Life* (London, 1883), p. 95. Kropotkin himself remarked rather drily, 'They endured me probably because of the difference in age; I was much older than these youths [i.e. Kravchinsky and Klements].' Quoted by Miller, *Kropotkin*, p. 100 from Kropotkin's *Zapiski* (Moscow, 1929), II, p. 227.

7 *Memoirs*, pp. 325–6. Serdukoff was one of the first populists to establish propaganda work among the workers in St Petersburg. See Miller, *Kropotkin*, p. 89. R. G. Zelnik has argued that Kropotkin's sharp distinction between metal and textile workers is an over-simplification. For example, a government official, involved with the large strikes of textile workers at the Krengol'm factory near St Petersburg, in the August and September of 1872, described the weavers as 'labour aristocracy'. See 'Populists and Workers – the First Encounter between Populist Students and Industrial Workers in St Petersburg, 1871–1874', *Soviet Studies*, vol. 24 (1972), pp. 259–60.

8 *Memoirs*, pp. 326–7. Zelnik suggests that the textile workers were in some ways just as urbanised as the metal workers, for they had played a perhaps greater role in strikes in St Petersburg than the latter. See 'Populists and Workers', p. 259.

9 See P. S. McKinsey, 'From City Workers to Peasantry: The Beginning of the Russian Movement to the People', *Slavic Review*, vol. 38 (1979), p. 648. McKinsey argues that town workers, finding little response from their co-workers, turned to agitation in the countryside and indeed spearheaded the chaikovskists' 'to the people movement' of 1874.

10 *Irish World*, 10 October 1874, quoted by K. R. M. Short, *The Dynamite War* (Dublin, 1979), p. 34. The Irish, of course, were thinking more in terms of conspiratorial groups for terrorism than of bands of agitators to encourage and help peasant revolt.

11 See Nettlau, *Histoire de l'anarchie*, p. 140.

12 Quoted Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, p. 471 from *S. M. Kravchinsky i kruzhok ehaykov* (St Petersburg, 1906), p. 13. In a letter to Chaikovsky in 1877 Klements declared, 'Yes brother, I say it truly, in my life I have come

across many people . . . but cleaner and better people than those in your group at the time of its flowering I have never seen. In that union which was ours, we were very strong, strong with the moral influence which we exercised on each other.' *Ibid.*, p. 475 quoting from *N. V. Chaikovsky Relogioznyye i obnshchestvennyye iskaniya*, ed. A. A. Titov (Paris, 1929), p. 54.

13 *Memoirs*, pp. 306 and 317.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

15 Miller, *Selected Writings*, p. 82.

16 Tikhomirov actually claimed that Kropotkin 'stood for compulsory activity, for circle discipline'. Quoted by Miller, *Kropotkin*, p. 110, from Tikhomirov, *Vospominainiia*, pp. 78–9.

17 Miller, *Selected Writing*, p. 86.

18 Letter to Madame Robin, 4 February 1877, Nettlau Archive IISG.

19 Letter to Madame Robin, 11 February 1877, Nettlau Archive IISG.

20 See letter to Robin, 16 February 1877.

21 Letter to Robin, 27 February 1877. Spichiger's speech at the civic celebration of the 1848 revolution is described by Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 149–50. The Radical Party through its important role in the establishment of republican government in 1848 had established itself as the progressive party from that time. Guillaume himself had earlier been active in it even becoming secretary of the Cantonal Committee of Neuchâtel. But as a result of the development of tension between the workers and employers, the party had suffered increasingly from internal squabbles. Nevertheless, it had a traditional popular support which was not easy to undermine, particularly when the socialists who broke away were quarrelling with each other. See Jules Humbert-Droz, 'Les Débuts de L'AIT en Suisse', in *Etudes et documents sur la Première Internationale en Suisse*, ed. Jacques Freymond (Geneva, 1964), pp. 14–43.

22 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 150.

23 Letter to Darnaud, 5 June 1890, quoted by Darnaud in a letter to Gross, 20 January 1891, Gross Archives IISG.

24 Nettlau declared that their different natures had never permitted a true intimacy and friendship. See 'L'Homme, une vie', *Les Temps Nouveaux*, March 1921.

25 *Memoirs*, p. 390.

26 Letter to Robin, 16 February 1877. This sentence follows his comment about his conversation with Spichiger. Kropotkin described Brousse as 'a young doctor, full of mental activity, uproarious, sharp, lively, ready to develop any idea with a geometrical logic to its utmost consequences'. *Memoirs*, pp. 393–4.

27 See letter to Darnaud, 5 June 1890, 'L'Avant-Garde was a more lively paper than Le Bulletin', Kropotkin declared in 'Comment fut fondé Le Révolté', *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 20 February 1904. In fact he had already become actively involved in the production of *L'Arbeiter Zeitung*. 'The letters from Brousse to Kropotkin show that the latter had become an active contributor to it.' (i.e. in April–May 1877) Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 206.

28 See *L'Avant-Garde*, June 1878.

29 *Memoirs*, p. 397.
30 Letter to Robin, 24 March 1877.
31 'Finally, they had forced a piece of work on me from Russia, a brochure on propaganda by deed. I set to work and must finish it.' Letter to Robin, 6 June 1877, Nettlau Archive IISG. There is no evidence, however, that this work was ever completed.
32 Letter to Robin, 29 April 1877. See Robin's letter, 2 April 1877, quoted by Guillaume in *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 173.
33 Letter to Herzig, 13 March 1909.
34 'Bulletin International', *L'Avant-Garde*, 11 August 1877. Brousse had given Kropotkin responsibility for this column. See letter from Brousse to Kropotkin, 30 April 1877, quoted by Guillaume in *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 202.
35 Kropotkin had criticised the American social democrats in an article in *Bulletin*, 10 June 1877, on the question of legislation for the eight-hour day. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 209. He had declared that the part of the programme of the American Labor Party concerning the expropriation of the instruments of labour was being forgotten by the leaders. 'The leaders of the American party, absorbed by their propaganda for so-called practical objectives, are already beginning to forget just as the German ex-socialist party have forgotten the revolutionary part of their programme.'
36 Letter to Robin, 29 April 1877.
37 'Comment fut fondé Le Révolté.'
38 Letter to Herzig, 9 March 1909. In notes on a Nettlau manuscript of 1895 [?] he declared: 'It is not correct to represent recent acts of anarchists as *acts of propaganda*. This is Brousse's formula, quote incorrect in reality. Not one act has been made for propaganda. All were acts of *revolt* against a hated force.' See Nettlau Archive IISG, quoted by Miller, *Kropotkin*, p. 260.
39 *Memoirs*, pp. 397–8.
40 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 221.
41 *Ibid.*, pp. 258–9. There had been some vacillation in the Spanish Federation over the question of rejecting involvement in the political parties, but this seems to have ended with the choice of Morago and Viñas as the Spanish delegates mandated to present resolutions in favour of propaganda by deed. See Albarracin's letter to Kropotkin, 10 August 1877, in the article by Marc Vuilleumier, 'L'Internationale en Espagne (1877)', *International Review of Social History*, volume IX, no. 3 (1964), pp. 468–88. Guillaume mistakenly identified Rodriguez as the pseudonym of Soriano.
42 Notes made by Kropotkin quoted by Nettlau in *La Première Internationale en Espagne*, p. 297. They also wanted to affirm that the Spanish Federation was ready for its part to support every movement in other countries.
43 *Ibid.*, p. 298. See also Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 260.
44 *Ibid.*, pp. 261–2 and 264.
45 Guillaume suggested that they only presented it because they were mandated to do so and were in fact prepared to work out an alternative proposal with the Jurassians. *Ibid.*, pp. 275–6. On this occasion Viñas presented the proposal because Morago was absent, having stormed out of the Congress

the previous day as a protest at a closure of the debate on political parties. *Ibid.*, p. 274.

46 The accounts of the Verviers Congress are very sketchy. See Nettlau's comments in *La Première Internationale en Espagne*, p. 296.

47 Albarracin lived first at Le Locle then Neuchâtel before coming to La Chaux-de-Fonds in October 1876. See Marc Vuilleumier, 'L'Internationale en Espagne', p. 143.

48 The 'Intimité Internationale' which seems to have been a continuation of Bakunin's Secret Alliance included Costa and Brousse as well as Morago, Viñas, Cafiero, Malatesta, Pindy, Schwitzguébel and Guillaume. See Nettlau, *Histoire de l'anarchie*, p. 144. There was, of course, close association between Brousse and the Spanish Federation dating from the latter's activity in Spain in 1873. Undoubtedly at this stage the group still worked together. Some of the correspondence Kropotkin received as secretary is in the Guillaume Archive, Archives d'Etat, Neuchâtel.

49 Kropotkin had been whisked away secretly because of fears that he was about to be arrested. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 271. In fact the fears were unfounded. Belgian police records indicate that there was no warrant for Kropotkin's arrest. See Miller, *Kropotkin*, p. 140.

50 In a footnote to 'L'Esprit de révolte', in *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 207–9 where he developed these ideas, he makes it clear that the article was based on his unfinished research of 1877–8 into the French Revolution to discover the origins of revolutions. 'As for the insurrections that preceded the revolution and followed one another during the first year, the little that I have said about them within this limited space stems from a piece of work on the entire subject I did in 1877 and 1878 at the British Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale, one I have not yet finished, in which I intended to set out the origins of the Revolution and other movements in Europe.' According to Nettlau, one of the books that impressed Kropotkin and confirmed his views on preliminary outbreaks was Felix M. Rocquain's *L'Esprit révolutionnaire avant la révolution 1715–1789* (Paris, 1878). See Nettlau, *Der Anarchismus von Proudhon zu Kropotkin (1859–1880)*, p. 271. Rocquain's book highlighted the role of the bourgeoisie in encouraging the rising tide of revolt in 1788 and 1789. Kropotkin certainly gave an enthusiastic recommendation of it in *Paroles d'un révolté*, p. 210.

51 See letter from a Spanish correspondent in *L'Avant-Garde*, 20 May 1878. The writer pointed out the increasing difficulty of producing propaganda.

52 A conversation between Nettlau and Kropotkin in October 1903, Nettlau, *La Première Internationale en Espagne*, p. 307.

53 In his manifesto for the Chaikovskist Circle Kropotkin had, in fact, expressed misgivings about the isolated action of individuals and groups against particular oppressors or specific local acts of oppression, arguing that any good effects of such action might well be nullified by the loss of the movement's activists in the savage repression that would follow. See Miller, *Selected Writings*, pp. 107–10.

54 Nettlau, *La Première Internationale en Espagne*, p. 308.

55 *Memoirs*, p. 416.

56 Vera Zasulich, *Vospomainiia* (Moscow, 1931), quoted in *Five Sisters – Women Against the Tsar*, ed. and tr. B. P. Engel and C. N. Rosenthal (London, 1975), p. 91. Dimitrii Klements accompanied Zasulich to Switzerland and befriended her in the difficult period of recuperation after her ordeal.
57 *Ibid.*, p. 88. Sergei was the Christian name of Kravchinsky.
58 *Le Révolté*, 20 January–3 February 1883. Cf. Kropotkin's reference to Zasulich's act, *Memoirs*, pp. 415–17.
59 Letter to Robin, 2 August 1878.
60 'Comment fut fondé Le Révolté', *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 20 February 1904.
61 Letter to Herzig, 12 March 1909. Cf. a further letter to the same correspondent, December 1913, where Kropotkin declared: 'The meaning of the word in 1877 was so different from the one Brousse gave it after Hoedal.'
62 Letter to Herzig, 9 March 1909.
63 In April 1877 Kropotkin had, in fact, resisted Brousse's suggestion that *L'Arbeiter Zeitung* should be closed down because of a shortage of funds to launch *L'Avant-Garde* and had made vigorous efforts to secure backers so that the German paper could survive. See letter to Robin, 29 April 1877.
64 Guillaume had left Switzerland for France at the beginning of May – ostensibly for professional and economic reasons, but also because he was disillusioned by the decline of the Jura Federation and the influence of leading militants led by Brousse. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 304–5.
65 Report of the Congress of Fribourg in *L'Avant-Garde*, 12 August and 9 September 1878.
66 *L'Avant-Garde*, 9 September 1878.
67 Rudolf Kahn was associated with Reclus and the Genevan Group of Russian and French exiles in the production of *Le Travailleur* (May 1877–April 1878) – a paper of which Kropotkin and Brousse disapproved because of its eclectic character. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 180–1. Although Kropotkin liked Kahn (see letter to Robin, 29 March 1877), there had been a strained relationship between the Jurassians and the Genevan Group (see letter to Robin, 6 June 1877). By the autumn of 1878, however, this had begun to change, for at a joint meeting at Neuchâtel on 9 June, it had been decided that *L'Avant-Garde* would carry on the work of *Le Travailleur*. See *L'Avant-Garde*, 29 July 1878.
68 Letter to Robin, 4 August 1878.
69 The Congress,

> In view of the attitude taken by the official organs of the statist social-democratic party, with regard to the revolutionary acts of Hoedal and Nobiling, acts which have all its sympathy . . . adheres completely to the decision taken by the anarchist party. *L'Avant-Garde*, 9 September 1878.

It would have been dangerous, of course, to have said a great deal about individual acts when outraged German authorities were pressing the Swiss government to clamp down on Hoedel and Nibiling's sympathisers. See *Memoirs*, pp. 416–17.
70 In January 1878 the Tsar had revised the sentence imposed on the fifty-five revolutionaries found guilty at the trial of the 193 – a revision which had

increased the severity of the sentences and which Kropotkin declared to be the work of Mezentsov. See *Memoirs*, p. 415.

71 Moncasi shot at the King of Spain on 25 October and Passanante attacked the King of Italy with a knife on 17 November 1878.

72 Letter to Robin, 1 November 1878.

6 KROPOTKIN AND ACTS OF REVOLT

1 'All the sections are languishing. We had created an *Association Ouvrière* at Lausanne at the beginning of the winter. Now it is dying; a section of the International, it is true, was founded; but it had no security. In general, things are in a sad state, poverty is killing everything . . . And then repression beginning here, holds everyone back.' Letter to Robin, 10 April 1879.

2 'Comment fut fondé Le Révolté'.

3 Letter to Robin, 29 January 1879.

4 'Que faire', *L'Avant-Garde*, 2 June 1877.

5 'La Situation', *Le Révolté*, 8 March 1879. See also *Paroles d'un révolté*, p. 25.

6 *Memoirs*, p. 418.

7 See letter to Robin, 10 April 1879. '*Le Révolté* is hardly sold on the streets any more except in the kiosks; there is pressure on the street vendors [cormorans] coming from the Hôtel de Ville.' The first issue of *Le Révolté* sold 2,000 copies as against the 200 per issue of *L'Avant-Garde*. See 'Comment fut fondé Le Révolté'.

8 'La situation'. Kropotkin pointed out the direction of change in contemporary society with a view to promoting that change. The influence of Rocquain's *L'Esprit révolutionnaire avant la Révolution*, pp. vii–x is clearly discernible in his analysis.

> Since the middle of the [nineteenth] century, the spirit of opposition had become the spirit of revolution . . . everything announced an approaching explosion . . . it is enough to consider the first years of the reign of Louis XVI, to be convinced that, whatever direction this prince took, the Revolution could not be avoided.
>
> It is this ferment of public thinking, this spirit of opposition becoming the spirit of revolution and manifesting itself with increasing liveliness up to 1789, that we have sought to show the origins and to trace the progress.

Kropotkin seems to have tried to write prophetically about contemporary events as Rocquain had written historically of events leading to the French Revolution.

9 'Comment fut fondé Le Révolté'. 'But his decision was taken; the crisis in the watchmaking industry had put him completely out of action, he had to withdraw for the moment. He agreed however to give me an article for the next issue – the article 'République et monarchie.'

10 Before leaving Switzerland Brousse produced two further articles for *Le Révolté* – 'La Preuve est faite' and 'L'Histoire d'un fou'. He did send a few articles thereafter on the economic situation but Kropotkin did not like them. See 'Comment fut fondé Le Révolté'.

11 'Elisée Reclus gave us an admirable article on the death penalty.' *Ibid.* Reclus had expressed doubts about publishing a paper without adequate financial

resources to Kropotkin at the beginning of January. See letter to Robin, 18 January 1879. 'Travailleur: dead and buried! Reclus tells me that he would only start again if they found an advance of 1,000–2,000 francs.' Nevertheless, Reclus began giving regular support to *Le Révolté* from May 1879. See Fleming, *The Anarchist Way to Socialism*, p. 141.

12 'But for the rest (i.e. apart from the articles by Brousse, Schwitzguébel and Reclus) we were reduced, with Dumartheray and Herzig, entirely to our own resources. I began a series of editorial articles . . . and we continued the three of us to do the social movement – Dumartheray and Herzig being very severe critics of all I wrote.' 'Comment fut fondé Le Révolté'. See also *Memoirs*, pp. 419–20.

13 Letter to Robin, 10 April 1879.

14 Certainly one of the advocates of the more radical approachy to the Social Democratic Party was Johan Most, editor of the new underground paper *Freiheit* which was later to become notorious for its advocacy of violent action by individuals and small groups. But in these early days Most restricted himself to urging the party to adopt more revolutionary tactics. *Freiheit* first appeared in London in January 1879.

15 'Procès Passanante', *Le Révolté*, 22 March 1879. The author was an Italian anarchist in Naples, and was presumably one of the correspondents upon whom Kropotkin relied for reports for the column on the social movement.

16 Passanante's notion of the Universal Republic seems to have been based on a sort of populist notion of the people. 'The greatest desire of all peoples has always been and will always be the desire to change the conditions in which they find themselves, the wish for work, liberty and continual independence. The hope of the people gives courage to this future. The people can be rich through solidarity.' *Le Révolté*, 22 March 1879. See also Passanante's comment when pardoned: 'It is the people who must in the final judgement have the last word. I will not accept the pardon.' *le Révolté*, 5 April 1879. Passanante had been convicted on a majority verdict and the sentence commuted to life imprisonment because of the fear that public sympathy might have resulted in a violent reaction among the people had he been executed.

17 Quoted by Clara E. Lida in 'Agrarian Anarchism in Andalusia – Documents on the Mano Negra', *International Review of Social History*, vol. XIV (1969), pp. 331–2.

18 Reports in *Le Révolté* of the trials of the internationalists in Italy accused of involvement in the bomb attacks in Florence during 1878 made it clear that Kropotkin and his Italian comrades disassociated themselves from indiscriminate class violence. See *Le Révolté*, 31 May and 28 June 1879. From the beginning, in fact, internationalists had indignantly denied complicity with Cappelini who had thrown a bomb into Victor Emmanuel's funeral procession. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 131. With equal firmness they protested their innocence when accused of the bomb attack of 18 November 1879 in Florence during a demonstration on the day of Passanante's attentat.

19 See *Le Révolté*, 22 March and 5 April 1879.

20 Letter to Robin, 10 April 1879. Kropotkin's comments were not altogether

fair for the *Zemlya i Volya* movement rejected the constitutionalism of the liberals. See Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, p. 621.

21 *Listok Zemli i Voli*, no. 2. See Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, p. 628.

22 Stepniak, *Underground Russia*, pp. 98–9.

23 Quoted in *Five Sisters – Women Against the Tsar*, p. 163, from the memoirs of Olga Liubotavich, in *Byloe*, nos. 5 and 6 (1906).

24 Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, p. 632.

25 *Le Procès Solovieff* (Geneva, 1879). It was probably published in July. See reference to its forthcoming publication in *Le Révolté*, 28 June 1879.

26 Venturi has pointed out that, whilst some leading members of *Narodnaya Volya* like Morozov and Liubatovich were preoccupied with the political aim of securing a constitution, others saw assassination of the Tsar as a way of starting an insurrection to hand over the state to the people. See Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, p. 673. If Kropotkin had been aware of this his pamphlet was an astute piece of propaganda in favour of the populist approach in a city like Geneva with its community of Russian revolutionary exiles.

27 *Le Révolté*, 28 June 1879.

28 *Le Révolté*, 15 November 1879. Meetings of Russian revolutionaries held at Lipetsk and Voronezh in June had resulted in a reconstruction and reorganisation of Zemlya i Volya to include both terrorist activities and agitation among the people. But the movement had finally split into twp separate organisations in September over the question of whether or not all revolutionary resources should be directed against the head of state. Narodnaya Volya declared for the purely political struggle for the destruction of absolutism whilst Cherny Peredel (Black Partition) pledged itself to continue agitation among the people in the countryside. See Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, pp. 649–57. Kravchinsky had attempted to reassure the readers of *Le Révolté* that this was a development implied in a division of function rather than any abandonment of populist socialist ideals. See his letter in *Le Révolté*, 1 November 1879.

29 Report of the Congress of the Jura Federation at La Chaux-de-Fonds, 12 October 1879 in *Le Révolté*, 18 October 1879.

30 *Le Révolté*, 8 November 1879. See also Guérin, *Ni Dieu ni maître*, II, pp. 99–104.

31 Cf. statement of Elisée Reclus at the Congress of Fribourg in 1878: 'Whilst this iniquity lasts, we anarchist-collectivist internationalists will remain in a state of permanent revolution.' *L'Avant-Garde*, 12 August 1878.

32 Brousse became increasingly critical of the Jurassians during 1880, and by the end of the year was developing the programme of possibilism. Costa shared Brousse's misgivings and became increasingly involved with the socialists. See Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism*, pp. 135–40 and Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani*, pp. 169–86.

33 Even after their first meeting in February 1877, Kropotkin had described Reclus as 'un vrai socialiste'. See letter to Robin, 17 February 1877. Similar intellectual interests and political sympathies drew the two revolutionaries together. After Kropotkin came to live in Geneva in the autumn of 1878 he

was undoubtedly stimulated by discussions with Reclus. Early in 1880, the latter invited Kropotkin to contribute to his *Nouvelle Géographie Universelle*. In the spring of 1880, Kropotkin and his wife moved to Clarens near to the Reclus family. See *Memoirs*, pp. 423–4.

34 See letter to Robin, 6 June 1877.

35 Reclus' letter to the Congress of Fribourg, *L'Avant-Garde*, 12 August 1878.

36 *Le Révolté*, 17 October 1880. Schwitzguébel had presented a statement from the Fédération Ouvrière de Courtelary concerning the destruction of the state and its replacement by the revolutionary commune. Although the Congress expressed a desire that the document should be published as a propaganda pamphlet it declared: 'The ideas expressed about the Commune could give the impression that it is necessary to replace the present form of the State by a more restricted form, which would be the Commune. We want to get rid of every statist form, general or restricted, and the Commune is for us only the synthetic expression of the organic form of free human groupings.' *Le Révolté*, 17 October 1880.

37 *Le Révolté*, 15 May 1880. See also *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 101–2.

38 Nevertheless he applauded the action of the Fédération Ouvrière du District de Courtelary in July exhorting voters to inscribe 'La Commune' on their voting papers instead of the names of the candidates in the cantonal elections. See *Le Révolté*, 17 October 1880. Kropotkin always held firmly to the belief that the territorial communes would play a leading part in starting the revolution.

39 Letter to Elie Reclus, 20 July 1878, *Correspondance*, ed. Louis Dumesnil (Paris, 1911–25), II, p. 214.

40 'Il faut decider: il est temps', *Le Révolté*, 27 December 1879. Kropotkin seems to have been short of copy over the winter 1879–80. Brousse had produced no further articles after September 1879, indeed Kroporkin had had to reprint a piece by Bakunin at the end of November because of Brousse's failure to produce a promised editorial. See *Le Révolté*, 30 November 1879. In such circumstances he may well have enlisted Reclus' help. Certainly Reclus became increasingly involved in the production of the paper. See 'Comment fut fondé Le Révolté'. The paper carried leader articles by Reclus, 'Ouvrier, prends la machine! Prends la terre, paysan', 24 January, and 'Evolution et révolution', 21 February 1880. The December article included quotations from *Das Kapital*. The only anarchist apart from Reclus with any respect for Marx was Cafiero, who in 1879 had produced an abridged Italian version of *Das Kapital*. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 294–6. Cafiero may have already arrived in Geneva where he came after his expulsion from France. As has already been pointed out, he did write two articles for *Le Révolté* ('Action', December 1880, and 'Danger', June 1881). In general, however, according to Kropotkin, he did not write for the paper because he thought it too moderate. See *Memoirs*, p. 423. See also Nettlau, *Der Anarchismus von Proudhon zu Kropotkin*, p. 301.

41 Members of the *Narodnaya Volya* had tried to kill the tsar by blowing up the royal train just outside Moscow on its return from the Crimea on 19 november 1879. The attempt failed because the tsar was not on the train.

See Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, pp. 682–3; and for details of the declarations of the *Narodnaya Volya*, p. 672.

42 See Kropotkin's obituaries to Reclus in *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 15 July 1905, *Freedom*, July 1905 and *The Geographical Journal*, nos. 2–6 (1905), pp. 337–43.

43 'Letter to M. de Gerand, 16 January 1882, *Correspondance*, II, p. 238.

44 'Les Pendaisons en Russie', *Le Révolté*, 3 April 1880. See also 'L'Année 1879', *Le Révolté*, 10 January 1880.

45 See his letter to *Justice*, 4 March 1880 in which he pleaded with republican France not to hand over Hartmann to an autocratic regime whose record of treatment of suspects precluded the possibility of a fair trial. For an account of the incident see Miller, *Kropotkin*, pp. 152–3 and 295.

46 See *Le Révolté*, 27 November and 25 December 1880. On this occasion the accused acknowledged their commitment to terrorism and their responsibility for the acts of which they were accused, declaring that they had been driven to it by the violence of government persecution.

47 *Le Révolté*, 30 October 1880.

48 *Le Révolté*, 21 February 1880.

49 *Le Révolté*, 18 September 1880.

50 'L'Année 1879', *Le Révolté*, 20 January 1880. He argued that peasant agitation was growing and promised to embrace the whole country, when a political revolution would lead to a change of government. At the same time, commenting on the attempt on the life of the king by Otero Gonzales, he had declared, 'If Alphonso had fallen victim to the young pastry cook's bullets . . . the abolition of monarchy in Spain would already have been an accomplished fact'. The report from the Spanish Federation about Moncasi's attempt on the life of Alphonso had made the same point in the autumn of 1879.

51 'L'Année 1880', *Le Révolté*, 8 and 22 January 1881. The New Year editorial of 1880 had concentrated on the Congress of Marseille and the revival of the socialist movement in France.

52 Most and Hasselman (a social democratic deputy who had made a revolutionary speech against the anti-socialist law) had been expelled from the party in August 1880 at the Congress of Weyden. Of Liebknecht's attempts to get amendments to the anti-socialist law, *Le Révolté* commented, 'It is still the affirmation that the socialists have had nothing to do with Hoedal and Nobiling and that the German socialists have no revolutionary intentions.' *Le Révolté*, 15 May 1880.

53 'L'Année 1880', *Le Révolté*, 8 and 22 January 1881.

54 'La Question Agraire', *Le Révolté*, 18 September 1880.

55 'Aux Jeunes Gens', *Le Révolté*, 7 and 21 August 1880; *Paroles d'un révolté*, p. 67.

56 'Le Socialisme en France', *Le Révolté*, 15 November 1879.

57 'Les Elections', *Le Révolté*, 25 December 1880.

58 *Le Révolté*, 15 May 1880.

59 Carlson, *Anarchism in Germany*, pp. 214–15. See also Lidke, *The Outlawed*

Party, pp. 124–5. The Social Democratic Party seems to have tried to be moderate and revolutionary at the same time. 'The principal result of the Wyden Congress was the severing of the revolutionary limb from the socialistic body,' declared a contemporary historian, 'while the Socialist Party was pretending to desire a peaceful development of events, its now official organ the *Social Democrat* was declaring that only by violent subversion can the Democratic State be attained!' W. H. Dawson, *German Socialism and Ferdinand Lassalle* (London, 1891), p. 261.

60 Hasselmann in his speech to the Reichstag had declared: 'I have always had deep sympathy for the energetic movement of Russian anarchists . . . for my part, I accept assimilation to the Russian anarchists. I am convinced that the thought which tends to predominate more and more in the spirit of the nation is that the time for parliamentary chit chat has passed and that the time for action has arrived.' *Le Révolté*, 15 May 1880.

61 The electoral tactic in this case was a development of the idea of illegal candidatures, and involved putting up protest candidates who had no serious intention of taking up a seat in parliament. Nevertheless it was a step closer to parliamentarism. Bertrand was involved in the decision of the Parti Ouvrier Belge to contest the 1880 elections. Malon was involved in the building up of the revisionist socialist movement in Lombardy. Vollmar edited the *Sozialdemokrat*.

62 See the report in *Le Révolté*, 11 December 1880. Anxieties about divisions in the revolutionary movement in Italy inspired Cipriani, with other internationalists, to issue an appeal in January 1881, for a truce over questions of doctrine so as to concentrate on the preparation for an armed revolt against all forms of tyranny. See Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani*, p. 198.

63 'L'Action', *Le Révolté*, 25 December 1880. About the same time Emilio Covelli, one of the Italian internationalists arrested in 1880, published a similar statement in Geneva. See Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani*, p. 167.

64 Jean Grave, *Quarante ans de propagande anarchiste* (Paris, 1921), ed. Delfau (St-Amand (Cher) France, 1973), p. 161. There does seem to have been something of an obsession with the revolutionary efficacy of violence in the emerging anarchist movement in France – 'We all, more or less – rather more than less – dreamed of bombs, attentats, dazzling acts capable of undermining bourgeois society. This mentality, moreover, existed from the dawn of the movement. The energetic struggle carried on against tsardom by the nihilists had strongly influenced our movement.' *Ibid.*, p. 166.

65 See Nettlau, *Der Anarchismus von Proudhon zu Kropotkin 1859–1880*, p. 301. 'L'Action' is attributed to Cafiero in *Histoire de l'anarchie*, p. 165. Maitron ascribes the authorship quite wrongly to Kropotkin. See *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France*, I, p. 78. Miller presents a more perceptive account of Kropotkin's view of terrorism, but he too associates Kropotkin with the article. See *Kropotkin*, p. 153.

66 Letter to Malatesta, 4 May 1881, Kropotkin–Malatesta Correspondence IISG.

67 *La Révolution Sociale* was in fact financed by the police with a police agent, Serraux, as its editor. The police chief responsible for this later declared, 'To

give a paper to the anarchists was therefore to place a telephone between the chamber of conspiracies and the office of the prefect of police.' L. Andrieux, *Souvenirs d'un Préfet de Police* (Paris, 1885), I, p. 339. Cafiero wrote regularly for the paper. He rejected Kropotkin's admonition. See his letter, 26 June 1881, *Studi Sociali*, no. 30 (1935).

68 Letter to Malatesta, 30 June 1881. Kropotkin is here referring to the response to the attempt to blow up Thiers' statue, on the front page of *La Révolution Sociale*, 26 June 1881. Andrieux shared Kropotkin's contempt for the fiasco – he had hoped that the anarchists would have provided him with the opportunity for launching a programme of repression against them, but they had done so little damage that he had had no real excuse to do so. See Andrieux, *Souvenirs*, pp. 349–51.

69 At the end of January, Cipriani and Cafiero, insisting on the need for insurrectionary action, had condemned the campaign for universal suffrage in Italy. See *Le Révolté*, 5 February 1881. In February, the anarchists had bitterly denounced the electoral activities of the Parti Ouvrier. See *Le Révolté*, 5 February 1881.

70 They held their own congress in Paris. *Le Révolté*, 11 June 1881, carried a report of its resolutions. 'They rejected universal suffrage as a swindle and a delaying tactic, and recognised propaganda by deed and the necessity for revolutionary organisation.'

71 'La situation en Russie', *Le Révolté*, 18 March 1881.

72 Kropotkin's letter to the Gazette of Lausanne about the right of asylum, a copy of which had appeared in *Le Révolté*, 2 April 1881.

73 *La vérité sur les exécutions en Russie* (Geneva, n.d.), pp. 28–9. He was also responsible for the putting up of a poster in the streets of Geneva denouncing the barbarity of the executions in Russia. See *Le Révolté*, 30 April 1881.

74 'Le Danger', *Le Révolté*, 30 April 1881. 'What good is it to ask much, when one is sure that the tsar will not grant anything at all? If there had been the least doubt that he would grant something, it would have been a better reason to ask him for nothing at all. In doing what they have done, they have put all the right on their side and all the wrong on the other'.

75 Letter to Malatesta, 4 May 1881. Zhelyabov was a member of the Executive Committee who seems to have been very much of a constitutionalist. See Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, pp. 654–5. Morozoff had been one of the chief exponents of terrorism, but his attempt to give an ideological form to pure terrorism had been rejected by the Executive Committee. *Ibid.*, p. 673. The pamphlet of Morozov to which Kropotkin referred was probably *La lutte terroriste*, published in Geneva and London in 1880.

76 Letter, 27 February 1881, State Archive of Vienna, Information Bureau 143 (1881) 51/ad 1525. This and the two other letters in this collection were written to a companion who had gone to Brussels and was in contact with the anarchist groups there.

77 Certainly if we are to believe Malatesta's account of its importance in an article for *Le Réveil*, 7 March 1914. 'Bakunin had a great deal of hope for the International, but nevertheless founded the *Alliance*, a secret organisation with a well-worked-out programme – atheist, socialist, anarchist and revol-

utionary – which was truly the soul of the International in all Latin countries and gave to one branch of the International its anarchist stamp whilst on the other hand the intimate understandings [*les ententes intimes*] of the marxists gave the social-democratic stamp to the other branch . . . The programme formulated in its memorable congresses, from being reformist and mutualist at the beginning became collectivist then (in Italy and French speaking Switzerland) communist, and from democratic and republican became (in the Latin countries) anarchist.' Kropotkin testifies to the continued existence of the *Intimité* in his letter of 27 February 1881 to the companion in Brussels. 'Do they want a secret organisation? I applaud this with all my strength, and my friends of the Jura applaud it also. *We have always worked that way and we continue to do so.*'

78 Circular letter to Malatesta, Cafiero and Schwitzguébel (undated), Kropotkin–Malatesta Correspondence. Kropotkin mentions having sent it in a letter to Malatesta, 12 June 1881. 'I propose to write a circular letter that I will send so that it can go round . . . to you, Charles, Adhémar and me.' The internationalists mentioned in the letter were Henry Malatesta, Charles Cafiero, Adhémar Schwitzguébel, Louis Pindy, Viñas (Rodriguez) and Morago (Mendoza). Malatesta was to be charged with the project of the journal because he was living in exile in London at this time.

79 *Ibid.* Kropotkin pointed out that of the 80–100 supporters in Geneva only two could be taken into a secret organisation, and of those two, just one could be an active conspirator. On the other hand, however, trade union support was being established which could provide a basis for an 'Internationale Gréviste'. A similar situation was also developing in France. The New Year editorial of *Le Révolté*, 7 January 1882, focussed firmly on the potentiality of strike action.

80 Malatesta's letter to the *groupe international intime*, 22 June 1881. 'Kropotkin, Malatesta e il Congresso Internationale socialista rivoluzionario di Londra del 1881', *Studi Sociali*, no. 29 (21 April 1934), and no. 30 (16 May 1934). He wrote an article on the same lines for *Le Bulletin* of the London Congress. See Nettlau, *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre*, pp. 228–30.

81 See Kropotkin's letter to Malatesta, 30 June 1881. Kropotkin also complained that as soon as the IWA could reappear in France it would be infiltrated by the *minimards*.

82 Letter, 26 January 1881.

83 Letter, 15 February 1881.

84 Letter to Malatesta, 12 June 1881.

85 Circular letter. Brousse was involved in the formation of the *Club International des Etudes Sociales* in March 1879, but there seems to be some doubt about his being the Club's founder. In fact he resigned from the committee of the Club in June 1880. See Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism*, pp. 146 and 149.

86 *Le Révolté*, 25 June 1881. Chauvière's preoccupation with the need for revolutionary groups to put aside differences in order to agree in uniting against the oppressors seems to have led him to write a dismissive paragraph in place of a proper account of the debates in his report of the Congress. See

Compte rendu du Congrès Révolutionnaire de Londres tenu le 14 Juillet 1881 (Brussels, 1881). This publication was recently discovered by Heiner Becker of the IISG, Amsterdam.

87 See Cafiero's letter, 26 June 1881, in 'Kropotkin, Malatesta e il Congresso Internationale socialista rivoluzionario di Londra del 1881', *Studi Sociali*, no. 30 (16 May 1934). The letter from Schwitzguébel, 3 July, and Pindy, 4 July 1881, are quoted in *Studi Sociali*, no. 31 (23 June 1934).

7 THE CONGRESS OF LONDON 1881

1 See *Le Révolté*, 18 March 1881. 'The IWA . . . exists in Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, England and North and South America. There is therefore no need to re-establish and reconstitute it, and we are absolutely opposed to the Congress of London concerning itself only with the re-establishment of an Association which has always existed since it was originally established in London.'

2 The declaration regarding the setting up of the bureau, which was actually drawn up by Figueras (one of the Spanish delegates) and Malatesta, was not put to the vote because delegates felt it simply restated what had already been agreed. The Congress, however, ended up declaring that its resolutions were not definitive and it was up to the local groups to accept or reject them. For the report of the London Congress see *Le Révolté*, 25 July and 6 and 20 August, 1881; see also Nettlau, *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre*, pp. 202–31.

3 There were no specific proposals for a Strikers' International (Internationale Gréviste) linked to a small secret international grouping for revolutionary action, but all this is probably implicit in his insistence on the inspirational role of revolutionary groups in a strong popular working class organisation. It seems likely that he avoided specific suggestions for secret groups and acts of economic terrorism simply because he thought that detailed discussion of the question should not take place in public. 'Now, it is clear that we do not speak about this at a Congress. I propose, therefore, at the Congress, to firmly avoid all conversation on this subject – even if it entails working on the organisation outside the Congress. That will provoke a mass of objections, from the spies at the Congress who will be the first to shout: Do you think there are spies in this Congress? But we must insist.' Circular letter. *La Révolution Sociale*, 31 July 1881, did not hesitate to draw attention to the terrorist implications of Kropotkin's speech. 'Delegate no. 13 [i.e. Kropotkin] says that it is not possible to make a revolution without the great mass of the people. Then comes to mind the question of knowing how to instil in the people, that great mass, the spirit of revolt? One means and there is no other, presents itself to mind: that is *economic terror*, that is to say blowing up factories, hanging employers etc.'

4 They also made conflicting proposals about the autonomy of groups and individuals with Kropotkin maintaining that individuals should belong to a group and join another if they did not agree with the other members of the group. Malatesta's proposal for the autonomy of both groups and individuals

in the IWA won the day. See Nettlau, *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre*, p. 209.

5 It is important to note that although Kropotkin had made a dramatic impact on the Jura Federation, and was generally respected as the editor of *Le Révolté*, he had not yet established himself as the leading figure in the European anarchist movement.

6 *Le Révolté*, 6 August 1881. He was referring to the following clause: 'The Congress of the IWA, held at Geneva 3 September 1886, declares that this association, like all the societies and individuals adhering to it, recognises that *truth*, *justice* and *morality*, without distinction of colour, belief or nationality, must be the basis of our behaviour to all men.' *Le Révolté*, 23 July 1881.

7 'Quelques mots sur Pierre Kropotkine par un ancien ami', *Groupe de Propagande par l'Ecrit* (Paris, 1921), p. 20.

8 *Le Révolté*, 23 July 1881. At the Congress of the Anti-authoritarian International at Geneva, 1873, there had been some discussion of the word *la morale*: Alerini (Spain) had proposed that it should be dropped from the preamble of the IWA because of the difficulty in defining such a term, but the rest of the delegates decided against this, since it was clear that the bourgeoisie understood words like 'morality' in quite a different sense from the internationalists. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 120.

9 It would seem that Kropotkin was advocating a direct and simple form of propaganda as against the more elaborate theoretical propaganda which was all too common in socialist circles. Brousse's final articles for *Le Révolté* (of which Kropotkin was very critical) are typical of this. See 'Libre Echange et Protectionisme', *Le Révolté*, 12 August and 'La Crise', 2 and 23 September 1879.

10 *Le procès des anarchistes devant la police correctionnelle et la cour d'appel de Lyon* (1883), p. 29.

11 In his letter of 12 March 1909, Kropotkin referred to Serraux and his supporters as *la bande Serraux*. It seems likely that many delegates were fairly suspicious of Serraux, and apparent support for him was due to the fact that his particular brand of extremism accorded with the mood of the Congress. Emile Gautier, for example, supported Serraux' proposal on morality but had his doubts about the man himself. In a letter to a friend, 22 February 1881, he had expressed concern that the *Révolution Sociale* had suggested publishing the names and addresses of the correspondents of the London Congress. See letter cited in *Lyon Républicain*, 13 January 1883, quoted by Maitron in *Le mouvement anarchiste en France*, I, p. 142. Gautier was a leading figure in the emergent French anarchist movement. He and Louise Michel had at first been persuaded of Serraux' good faith and had involved themselves with the *Révolution Sociale*. Kropotkin and Malatesta had always been suspicious. See *Memoirs*, pp. 478–80; see also Grave's comments in *Quarante ans de propagande anarchiste*, pp. 402–4.

12 In the name of the groups in France,

We declare that we have already decided on the creation of a secret press, which must start to function in a few days.

In addition, studies have already been made following which there was an attempt to blow up the statue of Thiers.

And we can give an assurance that there will be other acts before long, to add to this one. *Le Révolté*, 20 August 1881.

See also Nettlau, *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre*, p. 220.

13 Letter to Herzig, 9 and 12 March 1909. The 'Spirit of Revolt' articles appeared during the same period as 'The Appeal to the Young' which is also strong on the point about morality.

14 A programme of revolutionary action, in police archives (ANF[7] 12504) seemingly drawn up by Herzig and Otter and agreed by a group including Kropotkin, Elisée Reclus, and Pierre Martin at Vevey *prior* to the Congress of the Jura Federation in 1880, was almost entirely made up of quotes from the declarations of the London Congress but with significant omissions. Paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 5 were taken almost verbatim from the Congress report in *Le Révolté*; 2 and 3, however, have been truncated, thereby omitting all reference to revolutionary morality and the masses:

1 Complete destruction of present institutions by force.
2 The need to make all possible efforts to spread the revolutionary idea and the spirit of revolt by deeds.
3 To abandon the ground of legality so as to transfer action onto that of illegality, which is the only road to revolution.
4 Technical and chemical sciences having already rendered services to the revolutionary cause, it is necessary to recommend organisations and individuals belonging to groups, to give weight to the study and applications of these sciences, as a means of attack and defence.
5 This paragraph, which relates to the independence of groups and the creation of a corresponding bureau, is virtually the same as that contained in the London Congress declaration.

See above, pp. 157–8, to compare paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 with sections of the Congress Declarations. The programme in police archives is accepted as authentic by Maitron in *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France*, I, pp. 82–3. However, in the light of evidence already cited it seems unlikely that such a programme could have been drawn up prior to the London Congress and certainly not by Kropotkin and his friends. The police document is almost certainly a fabrication on the part of the enterprising Serraux and his friends in the French police to make the views of Kropotkin and the Jurassians appear more extreme and violent than they really were.

15 Letter to Herzig, 12 March 1909. At the trial of Lyon in 1883 the prosecutor accused Kropotkin of preaching assassination at the Congress of London. See *Le Procès des anarchistes . . .*, p. 28.

16 'L'Esprit de révolte', *Le Révolté*, 14 May 1881. See also *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 207–13.

17 'L'Esprit de révolte', *Le Révolté*, 28 May 1881. See *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 213–17. He was using the word *brochure* here which seemed to relate to theoretical propaganda as distinct from the simple, direct propaganda of the scurrilous pamphlet.

18 'L'Esprit de Révolte', *Le Révolté*, 25 June 1881. See also *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 217–22.
19 The phrase *feuilles volantes* (fly-sheets) was substituted for *libelles* (scurrilous satires) in *Paroles d'un révolté*, p. 219. Kropotkin actually distinguished between two sorts of pamphlets by using different words – *brochure* for the theoretical type and *pamphlet* for that which concentrated on attacking enemies of the people.
20 'L'Esprit de révolte', *Le Révolté*, 9 July 1881. See also *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 222–7.
21 Kropotkin quoted such examples as 'Down with the hoarder' and 'If the seigneur dares to collect his rents, he will be hung on this gibbet! Whoever dares to pay them to the seigneur, will suffer the same fate.'
22 See *Le Révolté*, 23 July 1881.
23 *Le Révolté*, 1 November 1879.
24 During the Congress Kropotkin had insisted on the importance of relating the character of the organisation and the action of the IWA to the programme of aims it wanted to achieve. See *Le Révolté*, 6 August 1881.
25 Whatever his reservations about the policies of the Russian revolutionary party, Kropotkin continued to campaign on their behalf. During the month he spent in London after the Congress he made the acquaintance of Joseph Cowen, the radical MP who published the *Newcastle Chronicle*, and as a result, the latter published a series of letters from Kropotkin on the situation in Russia as well as arranging for him to give a public lecture in Newcastle on behalf of the Russian cause. See *Memoirs*, p. 437; see also Woodcock and Avakumovic, *The Anarchist Prince*, p. 181. One of the first of these letters related to the Russian revolutionary party and actually explained that the savage reaction of the tsarist régime had left the revolutionaries no alternative but to resort to political terrorism. To illustrate his point Kropotkin quoted at length from the memoirs of Kviatkovsky, a member of the Executive Committee executed in November 1880, whom he regarded as typical of the Russian nihilists. See the *Newcastle Chronicle*, 12 October 1881. On the other hand, however, in his concern to allay liberal anxieties about his proposed public lecture in Newcastle he actually seems to have ended up in reassuring Cowen that he disapproved of terrorism. In a letter to a certain Bernard Cracroft, Cowen wrote, 'I got your letters and understand exactly your position with Kropotkin. I like him very much. He seems a good fellow. He wants to be able to put his case before an English audience, and I promised to secure one for him in Newcastle. I understand him to say distinctly that he does not approve the action the nihilists have followed. All he says is that the people of Russia are so tyrannised over that they are driven in desperation to unjustifiable courses.' See letter Joseph Cowen to Bernard Cracroft in the Cowen Archives, Tyne and Wear County Council. Obviously Cowen had not read 'L'Esprit de révolte'. It would appear that in both instances quoted Kropotkin had thought it politic to give a misleading, if not false impression of his own position in order to secure liberal sympathy for the Russian revolutionists. After all, although he seems to have accepted the necessity for some

measure of political terrorism in the Russian situation, Kropotkin was by no means convinced that it was the only form of agitation now remaining for the anarchists, and he certainly did not regard terrorist violence as unjustifiable. In fact, during 1882 he produced an article which more accurately reflected his views, although it still made concessions to liberal opinion by suggesting that the granting of representative government could have halted the desperate struggle against absolutism. See 'The Russian Revolutionary Party', *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 31 (1882).

26 *L'Esprit de révolte* was the first of Kropotkin's pamphlets to go into a second edition. It appeared in the *Droit Social*, July–August 1882, and *L'Etendard révolutionnaire*, August 1882, although the latter paper was suppressed before the whole of the piece had been published. See Nettlau, *Bibliographie de l'anarchie*, pp. 74 and 76. For figures regarding the printing, see Grave, *Quarante ans de propagande anarchiste*, p. 558, and Maitron, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France*, II, p. 350.

27 In fact the *Révolution Sociale* was an important factor at this stage in isolating the anarchists from the rest of the socialist movement in France. Lafargue, in his correspondence with Brousse did all he could to alienate the latter from his former associates by focussing attention on the uncompromisingly violent propaganda of the paper. See letter from Lafargue to Brousse at the end of 1880 in *La Naissance du parti ouvrier français. Correspondance inédite*, ed. E. Bottigelli and C. Willard (Paris, 1981), pp. 95–100.

28 In July 1881 the groups in the Lyon area mandated Kropotkin to represent them at the London Congress. See Lequin, *Les Ouvriers de la région lyonnaise (1848–1914)*; II *Les intérêts de classe et la république* (Lyon, 1977), p. 229. Later that year, on his way to England, he visited the Lyon region speaking at meetings where he evoked a sympathetic response. 'When I crossed France in 1881, on my way from Thonon to London, I visited Lyon, St Etienne and Vienne, lecturing there, and I found in these cities a considerable number of workers ready to accept our ideas.' *Memoirs*, p. 447.

29 Kropotkin wanted Schwitzguébel to represent the Jura Federation at the London Congress but Herzig, whom he regarded as too timid and quiet to be effective, went instead. See Circular letter, 12 June 1881.

30 'Tous socialistes', *Le Révolté*, 17 September 1881. See also *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 201–5.

31 'L'Ordre', *Le Révolté*, 10 October 1881. See also *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 87–91.

32 'Les Minorités révolutionnaires', *Le Révolté*, 26 November 1881. See also *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 81–6.

33 *Le Prolétaire*, 19 November 1881.

34 See *Memoirs*, p. 441.

35 *Ibid.*, pp. 441–2. Most had been imprisoned for his article applauding the assassination of the Tsar in *Freiheit*.

36 *Le Révolté*, 8 July 1882. The paper did not publish the full text of the letter. 'We pick out the following passages from this letter which has very much interested those present.'

37 *Ibid.* Kropotkin pointed out the high readership of *Le Révolté* and the *Droit Social* which together sold 7,000 copies per issue compared to *Le Bulletin* and *L'Avant-Garde* which together sold 800–900 per issue.

38 Kropotkin does not seem to have made any distinction between the social democrats and the possibilists, although there were significant differences between the two groups, with the former remaining ostensibly revolutionary whilst the latter had chosen the reformist position of socialism in stages. At this point in the letter there follows a whole section about the necessity for a real anarchist revolution where initiative and control remained with the people. He was particularly concerned to underline the necessity of preventing the establishment of representative government during the revolution because of the increasing threat of parliamentarianism in the socialist movement.

39 The Italian movement was going through a traumatic period. In the spring of 1881, Cafiero had joined Costa and the gradualist socialists. See Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani*, pp. 189–90. Finally, at the end of the year, Costa took his seat as a member of parliament for Ravenna and Malatesta became involved in a long debate to discredit both his former associate and the parliamentary position. *Ibid.*, pp. 207–8.

40 There is a break between extracts from the letter at this point. It is possible that he did not elaborate on 'agitation on the economic ground'. The omission however, more likely reflected the cautious policy of the paper over explicit reference to revolutionary acts.

41 See the report in *Le Révolté*, 8 July 1882. Werner argued strongly for more agitation within the commune and complained that little had been done to exploit the opportunity for anti-parliamentary propaganda during elections.

42 Werner was in fact no moderate. He had been involved with the setting up of *Der Rebell* in December 1881, which had contained an article entitled 'Economic Terrorism' in its first issue. See Carlson, *Anarchism in Germany*, pp. 331–2 and *Le Révolté*, 4 March 1882.

43 At his trial in 1883, Kropotkin had been anxious to disprove the charge that he had arranged to meet anarchists in the Lyon area to plan a programme of anarchist action. He had therefore stressed that the meetings both at Lyon and St Etienne had been fairly large public meetings to propagandise anarchist ideas whilst that at Vienne had only been a brief private visit to meet a small group of anarchists. Nevertheless, although Kropotkin had encouraged his friends to get together as many people as possible at St Etienne he had urged that the meetings should be essentially 'soirées familières' out of fear that the publicity associated with an ostensibly public meeting might lead to his expulsion from France. See *Le Procès de Lyon*, pp. 31–2, and letter to Pejot, 9 November 1881, *Archives de la prefecture de police* (Paris), Ba/73.

44 Letter to the Jura Federation. The membership of the various anarchist groups probably did not in reality total more than 1,000. See Lequin, *Les Ouvriers de la région lyonnaise*, p. 240. Police, however, estimated that there were only 2,650 anarchists in the whole of France in 1883.

45 See the report of the Congress of Lausanne, *Le Révolté*, 10 June and 8 and 24 July 1882; also Lequin, *Les Ouvriers de la région lyonnais*, p. 229. On 13 and

14 August 1882, there was an international meeting in Geneva attended by twelve delegates, six from Lyon, three from St Etienne and three from Vienne. See *Le Révolté*, 19 August 1882 and Nettlau, *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre*, p. 241.

46 'Lyon and the region possessed some excellent militants in the persons of Bordat, Bernard, Martin, Sanlaville.' Anne-Leo Zévaès, *Nouvelle Revue*, 15 June 1932. Bordat and Bernard played a leading role in the emergence of the group in Lyon after the break with the Parti Ouvrier in May 1881. Martin (le Bossu) was a remarkable propagandist who kept the group at Vienne going after the persecutions of 1883 and emerged as an important figure in the May Day demonstrations in that city in 1890. According to Lequin however, whilst there was a great emotional response to anarchist propaganda, this was not actually transformed into widespread action on anarchist lines. See *Les Ouvriers de la région lyonnaise*, p. 286.

47 'Les Droits politiques', *Le Révolté*, 18 February 1882; also *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 45–50; 'La Loi et l'autorité', *le Révolté*, 19 and 27 May, 5 and 19 August 1882; also *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 165–86; 'Le Gouvernement révolutionnaire', *Le Révolté*, 9 and 16 September, and 4 October 1882; also *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 187–200.

48 'Théorie et pratique', *Le Révolté*, 4 March 1882 and *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 229–34. The possibilists were challenging the domination of the guesdists in the Parti Ouvrier and according to Stafford, by 1882 enjoyed far more support amongst the working class committed to socialism. See *From Anarchism to Reformism*, p. 182.

49 *Memoirs*, p. 442. It is interesting to note however, that on 2 March 1882, just before the appearance of Kropotkin's article, an event occurred which may have given him some hope for British masses. Roderick Maclean shot at the Queen's carriage at Windsor to draw attention to the misery of the poor like himself. There was a sympathetic report about Maclean in *Le Révolté* which could have come from no one else but Kropotkin. 'Of a gentle nature, being a sufferer himself and able to understand the sufferings of others, he has done what he thought most useful to ease these sufferings.' *Le Révolté*, 18 March 1882.

8 THE TRIAL OF LYON 1883

1 *L'Etendard Révolutionnaire*, 30 July–15 October 1882; *La Lutte*, 1 April–5 August 1883; *Le Drapeau Noir*, 12 August–2 December 1883; *Le Défi*, 3–17 February 1884; *L'Hydre Anarchiste*, 24 February–30 March 1884; *L'Alarme*, 13 April–1 June 1884; *Le Droit Anarchique*, 8–22 June 1884.

2 'Les Collectivistes et la propagande par le fait', *Le Droit Social*, 9 April 1882.

3 *Le Révolté*, 15 April 1882.

4 *Le Révolté*, 1 April 1882. The derisive comment about rosewater socialists undoubtedly refers to the response of the leading figures of the *Parti Ouvrier*. An article by G. Deville expressing their view appeared in *L'Egalité*, at the same time: 'Let us not preach war against individuals but rather war against

classes: the first can only lead to particular punishments whilst the second is aimed at the transformation of the economic milieu'. *L'Egalité*, 1 April 1882.

5 Grave, *Quarante ans de propagande anarchiste*, p. 169. See also Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, p. 448.

6 The first part of 'L'Esprit de Révolte' appeared in *Le Droit Social*, 16 June 1882. In his letter to the paper Kropotkin promised support but not active collaboration. 'I cannot promise to be an active contributor, but in any case, count me as one of yours.' *Le Droit Social*, 19 March 1882. At the Lyon trial he denied ever having sent any articles for publication in the paper. See *Le Procès anarchiste*, p. 32.

7 *Memoirs*, pp. 451–2.

8 The *attentats* also involved attacks on a convent chapel and school at the hamlet of Bois-Duverne, after which a number of groups of rioters joined in a march on Blanzy, a town near Montceau. They dispersed before reaching the town however. (The miners' attention focussed on Blanzy because Chagot, the director of mines there, was an object of particular hatred.) At the same time as all this was happening menacing letters were sent to the city notables of Montceau. See Maitron, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France*, I, pp. 155–61.

9 *L'Etendard révolutionnaire*, 24 September 1882.

10 *Le Révolté*, 2 September 1882.

11 'Les Préludes de la révolution', *Le Révolté*, 28 October 1882. There are a number of points which suggest Kropotkin's authorship of this article. Now he was resident again at Thonon it would have been natural for him to assume a more active role in setting out the view of the paper on current events than he could have done whilst in England – particularly during such a crucial period. Moreover, the contents of the article are very typical of his thinking at this time and of his constant preoccupation with the necessity of presenting a summary of the signs of the times from an anarchist point of view to help the people clarify their ideas and to encourage them to act.

12 The reference to popular threats against housing proprietors in Paris relates to a poster of a group calling itself the *Justiciers du Peuple*, published in the same issue of *Le Révolté*, which advocated the burning of the furniture of oppressive landlords. As to the reference to popular revolt in Austria and Hungary there had been a report of riots at Pressburg in *Le Révolté*, 14 October 1882, whilst the issue of 16 September had indicated that revolutionaries had turned to violent tactics in response to savage persecution in Austria.

13 *Memoirs*, pp. 448–9.

14 Rapport Fabreguette, procurer général, 31 June 1884, AN.BB^{24}875. This was, of course, as reported by the police, so it could be inaccurate.

15 'Un Bouge', in *Le Droit Social*, 12 March 1882, quoted in the *Gazette des Tribuneaux*, 13 December 1883.

16 Both Bordat and the editor of *Le Droit Social*, Bonthoux, denied that Cyvoct wrote the article. See Maitron, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France*, I, p. 168. Moreover at the time of the *attentat* his friends insisted he had been in Lausanne. Anarchists generally insisted on Cyvoct's innocence, although

Grave had his doubts. (Grave, however, was hostile to Cyvoct because after being amnistied he stood as a protest candidate at the legislative elections of 1898.) See *Quarante ans de propagande*, pp. 191–3.

17 *Quarante ans de propagande*, p. 190.

18 *Le Révolté*, 9 December 1882. Nettlau says this article was probably written by Kropotkin. See *Anarchisten und Sozialrevoluzionäre*, p. 247.

19 *Memoirs*, p. 449. See also Kropotkin's letter to J. Scott Keltie, 6 November 1882, Archives of the Royal Geographical Society (London).

20 Cyvoct after all evaded arrest until March 1883 and even then the evidence against him was not very convincing. The jury did in fact have difficulty in reaching a verdict. However, although they could not find him guilty of the bomb attack they did convict him of the charge of incitement to murder. See Maitron, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France*, I, pp. 168–9.

21 The monarchists had finally been defeated at the elections of October 1878, and from 1879, with the establishment of a republican regime, civil liberties had gradually been restored. The invocation of the old law was therefore a cynical piece of realpolitik.

22 *Memoirs*, p. 450.

23 Letter to Elie Reclus, January 1883 in Elisée Reclus, *Correspondance*, ed. Louise Dumesnil (Paris, 1911–25), II, pp. 275–6.

24 'This trial of 1883 aroused a very strong emotion in the Ondine valley where meetings multiplied, wiping out, in actions, the division between the two schools; Kropotkin was frequently named honorary president of the meetings, and the radical socialists themselves hailed him as the savant.' Lequin, *Les Ouvriers de la région lyonnaise*, p. 284.

25 See Kropotkin's speech to the court, 15 January 1883, in *Le Procès des anarchistes*, pp. 101–2.

26 His first articles on expropriation had appeared in *Le Révolté*, 25 November and 23 December 1882.

27 The prosecutor, Fabreguette, wrote to the Minister on two occasions about the impact of Gautier's eloquence on the public gallery and the jury. See Maitron, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France*, I, p. 172 quoting from letter in the National Archive, AN. $BB^{24}875$.

28 'Lettre Ouverte addressée au compagnon Kropotkine', *La Philosophie de l'Avenir*, 8[e] année 1882–3, p. 398.

29 He had written a number of articles on the Russian revolutionary movement for the *Newcastle Chronicle* and the *Fortnightly Review*; his work in geography was well known in academic circles, and he was helping Reclus with his famous *Nouvelle géographie universelle* (1874–94).,

30 Letter from Elisée Reclus to his brother Elie, January 1883 in *Correspondance*, II, p. 272.

31 *Memoirs*, pp. 454–5.

32 One of the reasons for this was that the anarchists condemned in 1883 were not allowed to take up residence at Lyon on their release and therefore went to live at Vienne instead. See Lequin, *Les Ouvriers de la région lyonnaise*, p. 230.

33 Grave actually claimed that by April 1885 the movement had grown con-

siderably from what it had been in 1881. 'During my 18 months absence from Paris the movement had spread. It was no longer the "demi-quarteron!" The anarchists had become numerous.' *Quarante ans de propagande*, p. 207. Because the groups were loosely organised, however, there is no concrete evidence about the growth of the Parisian movement at this time. See Maitron, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France*, I, p. 127.

34 See Lequin, *Les Ouvriers de la région lyonnaise*, p. 229.

35 'The arrests had slowed down the correspondence of our group with those of the provinces', Grave, *Quarante ans de propagande*, p. 190.

36 See Maitron, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France*, I, p. 173. Three others serving a six-months sentence each repudiated anarchism. Kropotkin was very distressed by Bernard's defection – a defection that seemed to him just the same as those of Costa and Brousse. See his letter to Herzig, 30 June 1886 in *Le Réveil*, 3 January 1925. Nettlau points out the damaging effect of all this in *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre*, p. 249.

37 During the year following Kropotkin's arrest Herzig developed a good editorial style of his own. 'After I was arrested', Kropotkin declared in his memoirs, 'when he became responsible for the continuance of the journal, by sheer force of will [he] learned to write very well.' See Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, p. 420. This view is also expressed by Nettlau in *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre*, pp. 256 and 259. But although he had help from Dumartheray and also from Werner (who was a compositor, writer and linguist) he was having difficulty in coping with the task of getting the paper out, partly because the salary was too small to support his family and partly because, according to Grave, of his being incapacitated by drinking bouts. See *Quarante ans de propagande*, pp. 194–5.

38 'For the first year', Kropotkin recalled, 'we had to rely entirely on ourselves; but gradually Elisée Reclus took a greater interest in the work and finally gave more life than ever to the paper after my arrest.' *Memoirs*, p. 423. Reclus had supported the paper financially from the beginning and now when Herzig was having difficulty in carrying on he persuaded Grave to leave Paris for Geneva to take over the task. Herzig left for Spain soon after Grave's arrival at the end of 1883. See Grave, *Quarante ans de propagande*, pp. 194–7, also Nettlau, *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre*, pp. 256–9. Prior to Kropotkin's arrest Grave had provided *Le Révolté* with notes on the movement in France and the odd article. A letter in which Kropotkin advised and encouraged Grave in his writing was read out at the trial. See *Memoirs*, p. 453; also Grave, *Quarante ans de propagande*, pp. 169–70.

39 See Miller, *Kropotkin*, p. 164. Nettlau later recalled that the trial had aroused widespread interest in anarchism in England. See 'Freedom's Fortieth Birthday', *Freedom*, October 1926. There is an account of reaction in England in an article, 'The Lyon Trial', by Nicolas Walter, in *Freedom*, 29 January 1983.

40 See Walter, 'The Lyon Trial'. A translation was published in *The Republican* in April 1884 and *The Anarchist* in March 1885.

41 *The Anarchist*, April 1885. Charlotte Wilson wrote four articles on anarchism which appeared in *Justice*, November and December 1884.

42 See Nettlau, *Bibliographie de l'anarchie*, pp. 74–5.

43 *In Russian and French Prisons* (London, 1887), pp. 267 and 270. Kropotkin also discussed the conditions in the prison at Lyon in letters to J. Scott Keltie of 22 January, 2 and 24 February, and 2 March 1883, Royal Geographical Society (London).

44 *In Russian and French Prisons* (London, 1887), pp. 283–4. See also *Memoirs*, pp. 459–61. Kropotkin became ill with malaria and scurvy in 1884; a report in *Justice* in March of that year declared, 'The health of this vigorous agitator and friend of the people has suffered so severely from imprisonment that his death approaches.' According to Kropotkin the prison authorities dared not treat him and his fellow political prisoners too badly because 'they did not want to draw on themselves the thunders of Rochefort or the cutting criticism of Clemenceau'. *Memoirs*, p. 469. (Rochefort was editor of the notorious anti-government newspaper *L'Intransigeant.*)

45 *Memoirs*, p. 468. In a letter to Dumartheray (undated but probably written in 1885), Kropotkin made comments about Sophie's impression of *L'Egalitaire* which suggest that his wife read the revolutionary newspaper and told him what she had read. See *Le Réveil*, 3 January 1925.

46 *Le Matin*, 16 July 1884. 'My personal opinion is that so long as M. Ferry governs France, and the reports of his secret police are considered to be the best sources of information, we can only remain calmly at Clairvaux doing our best not to die of anaemia and scurvy.'

47 Articles on Russia appeared in *The Nineteenth Century*: 'Outcast Russia' in 1883, and 'Exile in Siberia' in 1884. Articles on the Afghan war, 'The Coming War', and Finland, 'Finland – A Rising Nationality', appeared in 1885 in the same journal. Both of the last mentioned articles referred unequivocably to the 'social question'. Kropotkin got on well with the governor of Clairvaux which may explain a lot. See *Memoirs*, p. 469.

48 Letter, 24 January 1883, *Correspondance*, II, p. 273. An unsuccessful appeal was lodged against the verdict.

49 Archives de la prefecture de police, Ba/1502. According to Grave anarchist groups in Paris regularly got the press of *Le Révolté* to print their clandestine posters. See Grave, *Quarante ans de propagande*, p. 200.

50 'De l'action anarchiste pendant la révolution', *L'Emeute*, 6 January 1884. See also *L'Emeute*, 9 December 1883.

51 'Les Préjugés anarchistes – violence de paroles', *Le Révolté*, 10–23 May 1885. The article was not written by Grave but by Gautier. The former only discovered the identity of the author some time later. See Grave, *Quarante ans de propagande*, p. 189.

52 'Quelques mots d'explication', *Le Révolté*, 24 May–7 June 1885. In November 1883, Paul-Marie Curien, an unemployed anarchist youth, aimed a revolver at an usher of Jules Ferry in Paris. In January 1884 Louis Chavès, an unemployed gardener, killed the mother superior (his former employer) and wounded her deputy at a convent in the suburbs of Marseilles as a response to anarchist propaganda. See Maitron, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France*, I, pp. 210–11. The reports of *Le Révolté* (24 November 1883 and 5 January and 30 March 1884) were sympathetic but did not glorify the deeds as did, for example, *Le Droit Social* which opened a subscription for the

purchase of a revolver to avenge Chavès. See *Le Droit Social*, 16–23 May 1885.

53 Graves, *Quarante ans de propagande*, p. 209.

54 For an account of Louise Michel's style of propaganda at this period see Edith Thomas, *Louise Michel ou la villèda de l'anarchie* (Paris, 1971), pp. 201–55. Andrieux's sneering account of Michel in his memoirs, however, does suggest that Grave's assertions were not without some justification even in the case of this famous revolutionist. He claimed that her propaganda in *La Révolution Sociale* had discredited the anarchists with all revolutionary parties at once, yet little harm had resulted from her violent utterances – her fiery speech about blowing up Paris had only resulted in the attack on Thiers statue. And he commented derisively: 'men who act in accord with their principles are becoming more and more rare, and no one proposed to carry cartridges of dynamite into the cellars of the [Bourbon] Palace.' Andrieux, *Souvenirs d'un préfet de police*, pp. 349–50.

55 Grave, *Quarante ans de propagande*, pp. 209–10.

56 See Clara Lida, 'Agrarian Anarchism in Andalusia – Documents of the Mano Negra', in *The International Review of Social History*, XIV, 1969, pp. 315–52; also Temma Kaplan, *Anarchists of Andalusia*, pp. 123–34.

57 'The Mano Negra . . . cannot be a worker association but, a society of lunatics supporting unattainable ideas, and with more criminals in its ranks than workers.' *Revista Social*, 8 March 1883, quoted by Lida, 'Agrarian Anarchism in Andalusia', *International Review of Social History*, pp. 318–19. A manifesto by the Federal Commission quoted in the same article expressed a similar view about the Mano Negra and its activities. 'Referring to the acts of *The Black Hand*, he [the president of the Federal Commission] declares that the Federation cannot be responsible for the acts committed, the Federation is an honourable and noble society, with ideals which are more or less utopian, but always worthy and elevated.' *Le Révolté*, 27 October 1883. In fact, Lida has cited documents of the Spanish Federation which showed a strong affinity with the notions of the Mano Negra. See Lida, 'Anarchism in Andalusia', *IRSH*, pp. 329–32.

58 *Le Révolté*, 27 October 1883. Earlier the paper had carried the following comment. '*La Revista Social* rejects the ideas that members of this secret league which people call *The Black Hand* are socialists, it disapproves of their methods and it says it does not recognise them. Maybe, but *we* cannot restrain ourselves from expressing our sympathy with "these fighters for existence" in the literal sense of the word. We always salute the rebels who do not wish to place their necks like sheep under the knife of the butchers.' *Le Révolté*, 3 March 1883.

59 See Carlson, *Anarchism in Germany*, p. 259; also Rudolf Rocker, *Johann Most. Das Leben eines Rebellen* (Berlin, 1924), pp. 198–220. Writing much later about the early eighties, Grave recalled, 'It seems that, at this time, the German comrades were haunted by this idea of getting money for the propaganda by any means whatever'. And he had been shocked to find that a young German he had sheltered had murdered a young prostitute to get money for propaganda. *Quarante ans de propagande*, p. 159.

60 See Carlson, *Anarchism in Germany*, pp. 258–9. An account of the Austrian movement in *Freedom*, March 1894, attributed its emergence to the impact of *Freiheit* on a proletariat which, because it did not have the vote, had not been demoralised by electioneering. The same article points out that the severity of the persecution prevented any serious discussion of anarchist ideas and meant that all efforts were concentrated strictly on revenge for the fearful persecutions.
61 In 1883 Werner had been helping with the production of *Le Révolté*. Since he was a good linguist and had been closely associated with the movement in Germany, it would have been natural for him to comment on the German-speaking section. The social democratic paper *Sozialdemokrat* had condemned those who used the method of theft and assassination. This reply was published in *Le Révolté*, 22 December 1883.
62 *Le Révolté*, 17–30 August 1884.
63 *Le Révolté*, 17–25 October 1884. The paper did however call for revenge for Kammerer's death.
64 *Le Révolté*, 18–31 January 1885.
65 *Le Révolté*, 1–14 February 1885.
66 'Reinsdorf et la Social-Democratie', *Le Révolté*, 18–31 January 1885.
67 'A nos amis', *Le Révolté*, 7–20 June 1885.
68 (With reference to the discussion of the necessity of propaganda by deed in the economic field), 'from the first there arose quite wide divergences of view about the field of action for anarchist groups. But, let us say immediately that all the groups found themselves in agreement regarding the necessity of propaganda by deed. In the course of the discussion on this subject, the supporters of direct struggle against authority came round to the views of the companions who thought that on the contrary, all anarchist communist efforts should be directed towards attacking the principle of property and that the war with authority would not fail to be produced immediately property was threatened.' *Le Révolté*, 18 August 1883. This discussion suggests that both the Italian and German anarchists took part in the meeting and that the rather moderate Swiss trade unionist element had virtually disappeared. It will be recalled that Kropotkin and Malatesta had disagreed over the question of the priority of economic tactics at the Congress of London in 1881.
69 *Le Révolté*, 18 August 1883. The idea expressed here is very much the same as that attributed to the German anarchist movement in *Le Révolté*, 22 December 1883.
70 Grave did not reject propaganda by deed believing that sometimes an act could achieve more than a long period of written propaganda. But he was implacably opposed to theft for personal gain and indeed saw action primarily as the expression of anarchist principles. See 'A nos amis', *Le Révolté*, 7–20 June 1883.
71 Grave, *Quarante ans de propagande*, p. 208. In the spring of 1885, as a result of the panic among the ruling classes in Germany following the shooting of Rumpf, the Swiss government had finally been persuaded to rid its soil of all anarchists associated with the German movement. Grave was questioned by

the police and, in expectation of his imminent expulsion, he and Reclus decided to transfer *Le Révolté* to Paris.

72 *Le Révolté*, 21 June–4 July 1885.

73 Grave claimed that the proceeds of the robbery by Duval were used by an accomplice to set himself up in business: 'And this is how poor old Duval thinking he had been working for the propaganda had only in reality been working to make one more bourgeois.' *Quarante ans de propagande*, p. 219. Grave believed police agents were mainly responsible for the debasement of anarchist ideas. *Ibid.*, pp. 207–8. Both the French and German anarchist movements suffered from the infiltration of their ranks by police spies and agents provocateurs. The social democrats often used this as an excuse to cast aspersions on the character of anarchists like Stellmacher and Reinsdorf.

74 Letter to Herzig, 30 June 1886, in *Le Réveil*, 3 January 1925. Grave's behaviour here was used to illustrate Kropotkin's contention that anarchist propaganda was not written simply to secure applause as Herzig had apparently claimed. In fact, Grave did not alienate readers in Paris, for the readership of *Le Révolté* increased after the move there from Geneva. See Maitron, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France*, I, p. 144.

75 In a letter to Nettlau, 5 March 1902, Nettlau Archive IISG, quoted by Miller, *Kropotkin*, p. 304, Kropotkin declared that the tone of the propaganda was calmer in the period 1884–90 than it had been in 1881–2.

76 Letter from Elisée Reclus to his brother Elie, 24 January 1883, *Correspondance*, II, p. 273.

77 Letter to Herzig, 30 June 1886. Herzig apparently did not have a great deal of confidence in his own talents, but Kropotkin did not share his friend's misgivings – Sophie had read issues of a paper *L'Egalitaire* which had been produced in Geneva and with which Herzig and Dumartheray had been associated in 1885, and she had been impressed by it. See letter to Dumartheray (undated) in *Le Réveil*, 3 January 1925. 'She has seen *l'Egalitaire* and is full of admiration for this slow and painful work which has to be done by little papers'. See also Nettlau, *Anarchisten und Sozial revolutionäre*, p. 256. *L'Egalitaire* appeared from 30 May 1885 to 2 January 1886.

78 Joukovsky had been a fellow Russian revolutionary in exile in Switzerland, Lefrançais was an ex-communard who also lived in exile there. They had both been sympathetic though critical of the anarchist movement.

79 See report of his speech at the Congress of the Jura Federation at Vevey in August 1875, Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 294.

80 'Il faut décider, il est temps', *Le Révolté*, 27 December 1879.

81 'La Grève d'Amérique', *Le Travailleur*, September 1879; 'Ouvrier prends la machine. Prends la terre, paysan!' *Le Révolté*, 24 January 1880; and 'Evolution et révolution', *Le Révolté*, 21 February 1880.

82 'Du pain, faut du pain!', *Le Révolté*, 11–17 September 1886. See also *The Conquest of Bread* (1892), ed. Paul Avrich (London, 1972), p. 82.

83 'La Pratique de l'expropriation', *Le Révolté*, 17–23 July 1886. See also *The Conquest of Bread*, pp. 55–6. Thomas was a general killed by the Paris communards.

84 'La Guerre Sociale', *Le Révolté*, 11–17 September 1886. The Chicago anarchists were executed on 11 November 1887. The evidence of their involvement in the bomb attack, which occurred when 200 police tried to break up a peaceful protest meeting in the Haymarket Square, was very flimsy. The meeting had been held to protest about the police opening fire on a crowd of protesters outside the McCormick Harvester Works, 3 May, which had resulted in several men being killed. Of the seven anarchists convicted, four were executed and three imprisoned, but an enquiry a few years later led to the release of the latter. See George Woodcock, *Anarchism* (London, 1962), pp. 437–8.
85 'Les Ateliers nationaux', *Le Révolté*, 25 September–1 October 1886.
86 Letter to Herzig, 30 June 1886.
87 'Anarchist Morality', *La Révolté*, 1 March–16 April 1890.
88 See Reclus' letter to Grave, 29 November 1891, *Correspondance*, III, pp. 96–8, and article in *La Révolte*, 28 November 1891.
89 See Kropotkin's letter to Grave, Fonds Grave, IFHS, and 'Encore la morale', *La Révolte*, 5–19 December 1891.
90 'Affaire de Chambles', *La Révolte*, 16 January 1892.
91 See letter to Brandes, 'The Genevan Tragedy', *Freedom*, October 1898.
92 See Grave, *Quarante ans de propagande*, pp. 296–7. He wrote another article to replace one by Kropotkin, 'La Vengeance', *La Révolte*, 18 November 1893.
93 'Etude de la révolution', *La Révolte*, 10 July–7 November 1891, reprinted in *Freedom*, December 1891–February 1892.
94 See *La Révolte*, 18 March 1891. Cf. 'Le terrorisme', *La Révolte*, 23 April 1892; 'Question de terrorisme', 24 May–2 June 1892; and 'Explication', 18 June 1892.
95 See Miller, *Collected Writings*, pp. 293–307. Cf. notes from Kropotkin to Nettlau which seem to be associated with a letter of 5 April 1895. See Miller, *Kropotkin*, p. 200.
96 Reclus to Zebelin-Wilmerding, 7 June 1892, *Correspondance*, III, p. 118. Cf. Reclus to Heath, n.d., *Correspondance*, II, p. 425, and to Roorda van Eysinga, 5 May 1894, *Correspondance*, III, p. 164.
97 Speech on anarchism at Grafton Hall, London, March 1893, in *Freedom*, April 1893.
98 'Le premier mai 1891', *La Révolte*, 18 October 1890.
99 *La grande révolution*, 1893, and *Anarchists and the French Revolution*, December 1903.
100 Nettlau to Kropotkin, Central State Archive of the October Revolution (Moscow).

9 TRADE UNIONISM AND THE ANARCHIST MOVEMENT

1 *L'Egalité* was established to replace the *Voix de l'Avenir* as the journal of the Fédération Romande after a quarrel between the latter and the Central Committee at Geneva over an attack, by Pierre Coullery its editor, on the resolutions of the Congress of Brussels on private property. See Jules Humbert-

Droz, 'Les Débuts de l'Association Internationale des Travailleurs dans le Jura', *La Première Internationale en Suisse*, ed. L. Freymond (Geneva, 1964), pp. 33–43.

2 For an account of the discussion see Freymond, *Recueil*, I, pp. 265–90. The Congress resolutions certainly reflected De Paepe's concern about the importance of avoiding violent and disorganised action whilst developing trade union organisation in the International to render whatever action seemed opportune and necessary, as effective as possible. See Freymond, *Recueil*, I, p. 290.

3 For the resolution about a general strike against war see Freymond, *Recueil*, I, p. 404, and pp. 260–4 for the debate on the question of war. The idea of generalised strike action seems to have come from Spehl, a delegate from Brussels.

4 At the Congress of Brussels De Paepe had drawn attention to two recent notable examples of successful strike action involving both local and international trade union organisation. The first was the case of the bronze workers' dispute in Paris over the right to organise, the second was the case of the building workers' dispute in Geneva over pay and hours of work. See Freymond, *Recueil*, I, pp. 281–2.

5 See 'La Double grève de Genève', *L'Egalité*, 3 April 1869, also Michel Bakounine, *Le Socialisme libertaire*, ed. Fernand Rude (Paris, 1973), pp. 65–74. This article was written in the wake of the success of the great builders' strike in the spring of 1868 which produced a substantial increase in local workers' support for the IWA. Nevertheless, as Vuilleumier has pointed out, the strength of the IWA was more apparent than real, being made up, for the most part, of elements drawn by sucesss but easily discouraged at the first setback. See *Bakounine et le mouvement ouvrier de son temps*, in *Bakounine: combats et débats*, Collection Historique de l'Institut d'Etudes Slaves, XXVI (Paris, 1979), p. 123.

6 *L'Egalité*, 28 August 1869. 'These sections [of the International] also bear in themselves the living seeds of the new society which is to replace the old world. They are creating not only the ideas, but also the facts of the future itself.' Quoted in Dolgoff, *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 255 from Max Nettlau, *Der Anarchismus von Proudhon zu Kropotkin (1859–1880)*(Berlin, 1927), p. 133.

7 Letter to Morago, 21 May 1872, quoted by Vuilleumier in *Bakounine et le mouvement ouvrier de son temps*, p. 127. Bakunin was explaining to Morago the difference between the International and the Alliance (presumably the secret alliance which he had proclaimed publicly no longer existed).

8 Article in *L'Egalité*, 14 August 1869.

9 'Ecrit contre Marx (fragment formant une suite de l'Empire Knouto-Germanique' (November–December 1872) in *Michel Bakounine et les conflits dans l'Internationale*, ed. Arthur Lehning (Brill, 1965), Archives Bakounine, II, p. 188.

10 'La Double grève de Genève', p. 73.

11 For contacts between Bakunin and the Spanish Federation see Max Nettlau, *La Première International en Espagne, 1808–1888*, ed. Renée Lamberet

(Dordrecht, 1969). The speech of José Llunas Pujols at the Congress of Seville in 1882 quoted by Nettlau in *L'Histoire de l'anarchie*, pp. 176–7, gives a good idea of the organisational concepts of the Spanish Federation in its early years. Llunas was an influential militant who elaborated ideas about syndicalist organisation as the basis of future society and opposed anarchist communism.

12 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, pp. 86–7. See also Kaplan, *Anarchists of Andalusia*, pp. 104–7. Kaplan has pointed out that in provinces such as Cadiz, which were dominated by one or two industries, labour struggles easily turned into community struggles because of the lack of any distinction between the workers and the people and that, in such a situation, police provocation of the unions inspired by local authorities' fear of insurrection actually tended to precipitate popular revolt.

13 'The Spanish Commission for correspondence published a protest on the 15th of June in which it said: 'The workers must avoid all the tricks and tricksters of bourgeois politics, organise themselves and get ready for the revolutionary action of the proletariat to destroy, as soon as possible, the privileges which give authoritarian powers their strength.' Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 86.

14 Nettlau, *La Première Internationale en Espagne*, p. 202.

15 *La Solidarité Révolutionnaire*, 31 July 1873. This paper which was intended primarily for propaganda in the South of France, had been established in Barcelona by French refugees from the Commune, Brousse, Alerini and Camet, a group which played a leading part in the local action of the internationalists in 1873. See Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism*, p. 36.

16 See the Report of the Congress of Geneva, Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, p. 62. According to Nettlau the year from September 1872 to August 1873 had been marked by some 115 strikes, the support of which had put great strain on the financial resources of the sections of the Spanish Federation. See *La Première Internationale en Espagne*, pp. 181–2.

17 It would appear that Viñas was an elitist, aristocratic and authoritarian; indeed he was accused by one leading militant of being virtual dictator of the Commission during the 1870s when Morago left for France. He and his fellow commissioners do not seem to have had much confidence in the ability of the workers and peasants to triumph over oppression without their guidance. See Kaplan, *Anarchists of Andalusia*, p. 114.

18 As early as 1868 of course there had been an important strike of the building workers of Geneva for improvements in the method of wage payments and a reduction of the working day to ten hours. The strike had involved 3,000 workers. See Vuilleumier, *La Première Internationale en Suisse*, p. 238. For an account of trade union activity in the watch trade at this period see R. A. G. Miller, 'The Watchmakers of the Swiss Jura 1848–1900, Aspects of Politics and Society in an Era of Crisis', D.Phil. dissertation, Oxford, 1974, pp. 254–70.

19 Vuilleumier has estimated the membership of the sections of Geneva and the Jura as 2,000 and 800 respectively in 1870. See *La Première Internationale en Suisse*, pp. 235–6.

20 Schwitzguébel drew up the draft contract which the unions presented to the

employers in 1871; he was also instrumental in establishing the Fédération du District du Courtelary in 1872, in which, for the first time, all the workers of the local watch trades grouped together to resist the combination of employers against collective bargaining. See Miller, 'The Watchmakers of the Jura', pp. 259–63. But popular support for the Radical Party persisted in spite of working-class support attracted to the IWA by the builders' strike of 1868. See Vuilleumier, *Bakounine et le mouvement ouvrier de son temps*, p. 128. The Congress of the Jura Federation at Le Locle in 1872 complained of the narrow self-interest of some unions, and, in its resolutions noted the lack of revolutionary concepts in the workers' movement. See *Le Bulletin*, June 1872.

21 'Manifesto addressé aux ouvriers du Vallon de Saint-Imier', in *Quelques Ecrits de Schwitzguébel*, ed. Guillaume (Paris, 1906), pp. 1–23.

22 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 9.

23 Freymond, *Recueil*, II, p. 265.

24 *Le Bulletin*, 8 June 1872. This was a report, made by Schwitzguébel, about the Federation's response to the proposal for a new federal constitution for Switzerland. In their heated discussions with the German-speaking socialists at Olten in 1873 it is clear that the Jurassians identified the 'Commune de travailleurs' as a federation of all the local trades. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 73.

25 Robert Brécy, *La Grève générale en France* (Paris, 1969), pp. 14–15. At a meeting in Paris, reported in *Le Rappel*, 22 October 1869, a socialist speaker listed the strike as a way of working for socialism which would be unsuccessful whilst it remained partial rather than general. In June 1870, *La Solidarité*, the bakuninist paper of the Suisse Romande edited by Guillaume, had expressed an even clearer view of the general strike as a revolutionary tactic: 'We are not far perhaps from the moment when partial strikes will be transformed into a general strike which will put the workers in possession of the instruments of labour.' *La Solidarité*, 11 June 1870. '(This article had appeared in the wake of the successful strike, in May, of engravers and engine turners at Neuchâtel.)

26 Even as late as 1908 Seebohm Rowntree declared that the typical diet of a Belgian working family was inferior to that of any English workhouse. See Seebohm Rowntree, *Comment diminuer la misère – études sur la Belgique* (1910). Apart from a brief period 1871–1873, the poverty of the Belgian workers in the last decades of the century was not a great deal changed from what it had been in the forties. There was very little increase in real wages during that period and in fact those of the miners declined. See Louis Bertrand, *L'Ouvrier Belge depuis un siècle* (Brussels, 1924), p. 195. Although industrialists managed to thrive in spite of setbacks, the recurring industrial crises after 1873, in a situation of high population density, led to unemployment as well as falling wage rates.

27 Commenting on the period before 1872, Bertrand declared that 'they [the miners] had the habit of stopping work without warning their employers, without acquainting them of their grievances and desires. And the strike once declared, without a clear aim, organisation, preliminary discussion, a real

strike of despair, would degenerate rapidly into a riot'. *L'Histoire de la démocratie et du socialisme en Belgique* (Brussels, 1906), II, p. 202.

28 Bertrand later complained that the propaganda of the Brussels section had not been appropriate to the needs and understanding of the desperate and ignorant workers of the Hainaut. See Bertrand, *L'Histoire de la démocratie*, p. 294.

29 See C. Oukhow, *Documents relatifs de la Première Internationale en Wallonie* (Louvain/Paris, 1967).

30 The 'boom' situation of the early 1870s put most workers in a better position than they had ever been or were to be again until after the end of the century. The ten-hour-day movement spread to Brussels and obtained some successes. Even the miners of Charleroi and the Borinage were inspired to strike in a more coherent and organised way than they had done before.

31 Bertrand, *L'Histoire de la démocratie*, pp. 238–9. Bertrand actually attributed it to a bitter reaction to the violent and triumphant way in which the authorities broke up a peaceful anti-militarist demonstration in 1870 (p. 200).

32 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 92. The textile workers do not seem to have benefited from the boom situation affecting other industries. A long strike in August–November 1873 ended in defeat. See Vandermeulen, *Le Mouvement ouvrier socialiste à Verviers. Esquisse d'une histoire*, Verviers, 1960), p. 15.

33 *Le Mirabeau*, 9 February 1873, also Vandermeulen, *Le Mouvement ouvrier socialiste à Verviers*, p. 14.

34 See Report, *Le Mirabeau* (Verviers), 4 May 1873; also Freymond, *Recueil*, III, pp. 172–3. Levarlet of Pepinster, 'said that in his view it was essential for each profession to list grievances they had against their employers, and clearly formulate their aspirations.' Van den Abeele of Antwerp, urging the need for the support of the agricultural workers, declared 'the proletarians in the fields have at least as many grievances to articulate as the workers in industry.'

35 *Le Bulletin*, 15 May 1873. See also Freymond, *Recueil*, III, p. 81.

36 Debate about the general strike at the Congress of Basle, Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, pp. 59–63 and 75–6.

37 Clearly it was this remark which was mainly responsible for Viñas's comment that delegates really only meant a partial strike when they talked of the general strike. In fact the notion of the general strike at this stage was generally rather vague. Sometimes it seemed to mean a universal strike, sometimes a local strike of all workers in a particular trade, sometimes it simply meant the generalisation of strike action among workers in a particular trade, locality etc. For an examination of this question see Michelle Perrot, *Les Ouvriers en grève: France 1871–1890* (Paris, 1974), I, pp. 489–92.

38 Brousse condemned the idea of the general strike involving a total cessation of work in all countries at the same time as either utopian or an unnecessary complication in an ultimately violent struggle between labour and capital. He argued that the general strike was not a universal weapon for whilst it might be a possible method in certain countries, it could not be used in others like France and Italy. See Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, p. 61. Viñas's condemnation of

the general strike had already been discussed. Costa insisted there could be no declaration in favour of the general strike because of lack of agreement and insisted that the question of methods of action should be left to the decision of the individual federations. And he added caustically: 'It has just been said and everyone is agreed on this point that the general strike is synonymous with a social revolution. Now a revolution cannot be regulated.' *Recueil*, IV, p. 61.

39 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 194. The reference to workers' associations which were better organised than those of the Jura seems to mean some of those in Belgium – perhaps the Union des Métiers de l'Industrie du Centre whose organisation Delsinne has claimed prefigures the unions of the twentieth century. See *Le Parti Ouvrier Belge*, p. 51.

40 See 'Les Bakouninistes – au travail', *Volkstaat* (1873), republished in Marx and Engels, *Contre l'anarchisme* (Paris, 1935). The bakuninists were at pains, however, to persuade the workers to look beyond the limited struggle for amelioration. In January 1874, during a protracted strike of case workers, they insisted on the need for a more general struggle against capital. 'Yes, it has to be recognised: the only method of ensuring the success of the workers' demands is to generalise the struggle, to oppose the world league of labour to the universal league of capital.' 'Le Remède à la crise', *Le Bulletin*, 18 January 1874. (The strike began in December 1873 and lasted until March 1874. It was a defensive strike over wage reductions. The workers finally secured a restoration of the wage rates but in the meantime many workers left the area. See Miller, *The Watchmakers of the Jura*, p. 267.)

41 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 195.

42 *Le Bulletin*, 14 June 1874, also quoted in Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 247.

43 See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, pp. 276–7.

44 Strike action had probably been both less successful and more costly in Belgium than it had been in Switzerland. The Swiss unions were always very preoccupied with the establishment and maintenance of their *caisses de résistance*. It seems likely that in Belgium where the situation of the workers was more desperate this would have been difficult. As regards strike action, Molnar has declared that in the case of Belgium, the period 1871–2 was an epoch of great victorious strikes. See *Le Déclin de la Première Internationale: la conférence de Londres de 1871* (Geneva, 1963), p. 29. Molnar quotes the example of the engineers strike in Brussels for the ten-hour day in Brussels in 1871. Delsinne however argues that overall the results of the strikes were variable. See *Le Parti Ouvrier Belge*, p. 51.

45 See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, p. 304 and Vandermeulen, *Le Mouvement ouvrier socialiste à Verviers*, p. 15.

46 Bertrand, *L'Histoire de la démocratie*, II, p. 294. See also Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 121–2.

47 'The delegate for the Bassin de la Vesdre believed he had to vote for the decision, because it was necessary, as far as possible, to maintain unity of action between the workers.' Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 69–70.

48 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 119. 'We therefore had to behave very

discreetly, not upsetting the internationalists and not asserting the new tendency too vigorously.' Bertrand, *L'Histoire de la démocratie*, p. 294. Guillaume de Greef wrote an apologetic letter to the authors of the Petition, 29 September 1876: 'If a serious workers' organisation existed in Belgium, it would have no need to petition the chamber of representatives to obtain what it would be in a situation to carry out without the arbitrary intervention of any authority whatever.' See Bertrand, *L'Histoire de la démocratie*, p. 298.

49 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 119. Bertrand, however, recounts how he and Anseele held meetings at Verviers to defend their tactic, claiming, 'These two young men succeeded in convincing a few hundred organised workers, in spite of the opposition of the *leaders* there.' *L'Histoire de la démocratie*, p. 300.

50 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 131–3.

51 The report of a speech of Verryken at Verviers commented: 'The members of the International are no longer inactive.' *Le Révolté*, 12 July 1879.

52 On 28 July 1875 workers involved in the construction of the St Gotthard Tunnel went on strike for shorter shifts and fortnightly wages instead of monthly wages in paper vouchers. The employer, desperate to keep to his completion schedule, invoked military aid from the cantonal government. The troops fired on the strikers killing four and wounding twelve. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, III, pp. 295–6.

53 *L'Internationale*, III, p. 297. The response to the appeal was very good: 629 francs were collected. See letter from Guillaume to Cafiero, 16 March 1876, *Archives de la Fédération Jurassienne*, IISG.

54 See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 298, also *Le Bulletin*, 31 October 1875. The sections rejected the committee's call. See Enckell, *La Fédération Jurassienne*, p. 111.

55 Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, p. 61.

56 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 108–9. See also Freymond, *Recueil*, IV, pp. 494–5.

10 COLLECTIVE ACTION IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

1 *Memoirs*, pp. 273–4 and 287. He lectured to Russian workers about the workers' movement in Belgium when he returned to Russia according to the account of a worker called Mitrofanov. See Miller, *Kropotkin*, p. 99, quoting from a Fond 112 opis'i, delo 213 (1874) listy 27–9, Central State Archive of the October Revolution (Moscow).

2 See 'Must We Occupy Ourselves with an Examination of the Ideal of a Future System?', *P. Kropotkin, Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution*, ed. Miller, pp. 168–73.

3 See *Populists and Workers*, p. 259; also McKinsey, *The Beginnings of the Russian Movement to the People*, pp. 632 and 643. For a detailed account of the Krengol'm strike see R. E. Zelnik, *Labour and Society in Tsarist Russia. The Factory Workers of St Petersburg 1855–1870* (Stanford, 1971), pp. 331–69.

4 Kropotkin described Schwitzguébel as a watch engraver who 'never

attempted to abandon his position of manual worker' and whose 'gift of taking a difficult economic and political question and after much thought about it, considering it from a workingman's point of view, was wonderful. He was known far and wide in the "mountains", and with the workers of all countries he was a general favourite.' *Memoirs*, p. 391. For details of Kropotkin's first meeting with Schwitzguébel, see *Memoirs*, pp. 285–6.

5 'A propos de la question d'Orient', *Le Bulletin*, 25 September 1876. Gladstone had just published his pamphlet *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, and was successfully exploiting popular outrage for his own and the party's advantage. For an account of how the liberal party exploited popular indignation over the Bulgarian Atrocities, see E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (London, 1955, new edition, 1977), pp. 202–6.

6 *Le Bulletin*, 8 October 1876, quoted in Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 71. For an account of TUC involvement with parliamentarism see Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism* (London, 1963), pp. 72–86, and Keith Burgess, *The Challenge of Labour* (London, 1980), p. 52.

7 See letter to Robin, 17 January 1877, Nettlau Archive IISG. 'This paper as a result of intrigues the details of which I do not exactly know, was now dominated by influences which tended to transform it into an organ hostile to our tendencies; a part of those who held firmly to the flag of revolutionary socialism . . . saw themselves set aside: it rejected their articles and accepted those of Sellier, a French teacher exiled in Belgium belonging to the positivist sect who, under the anagram of Resille was attacking and slandering our friends.' Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 134. By 1 November 1876 the revolutionaries had esıtablished a group, *Le Cercle Etincelle*, to combat the 'reactionary intrigue'. *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 134.

8 Letter to Robin, 4 February 1877. It should be recalled that in November 1876 the majority of the Verviétois, at a meeting with the socialists of Antwerp, had been unwilling either to support or oppose the *Gantois* Petition to Parliament against Child Labour. In January, immediately prior to Kropotkin's visit to Verviers, Bertrand had been trying to justify the Belgian Federation's change of tactics to the sceptical Jurassians.

9 According to Kropotkin, the editorial control of *Le Mirabeau* was a crucial factor for the anarchists. 'You cannot imagine how they are attached to their *Mirabeau*. It is their dearest child. It is their Hôtel de Ville. Whoever has it – reigns.' Kropotkin declared that the editorial group consisted of men of straw who simply met on Mondays, recorded the manuscripts of Sellier or Dellesalle and sent them to the printers without reading them. Real editorial control, he insisted, was exercised by Sellier and the Bruxellois. Letter to Robin, 4 February 1877.

10 Letter to Robin, 27 February 1877. By March Kropotkin had received a reassuring letter from Fluse. 'The letter that *Fluse* writes to me is reassuring. The anarchist party is at work.' Letter to Robin, 10 March 1877.

11 Letter to Robin, 11 February 1877.

12 Letter to Robin, 27 February 1877.

13 Letter to Robin, 10 March 1877.

14 'As to the last [note] that I have given to James, we resolved to send it as a *ballon d'essai* to *Le Mirabeau*.' Letter to Robin, 29 April 1877. 'This article is the subject of a letter from me to Kropotkin the 14th of April when I said to him: I was keen to keep your article for *Le Bulletin* for truly I find it excellent. It is necessary however to send something to *Le Mirabeau*. I am making the sacrifice of returning to you for that purpose.' Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 179, n.

15 'L'Angleterre' (Correspondance particulière du Mirabeau), *Le Mirabeau*, 29 April 1877. In February, Robin had sent a letter about the English trade union movement to *Le Bulletin* which had made some of the same points. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 135. MacDonald was a trade unionist candidate elected to parliament with liberal support in 1874. See Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, pp. 74–5. Leaders like Applegarth, named in Kropotkin's article, advocated industrial conciliation wherever possible and favoured arbitration to resolve disputes because of their anxiety to protect union finances. 'Never surrender the right to strike, but be careful how you use a double-edged weapon,' had declared Applegarth, secretary of the Amalgamated Carpenters and leading figure in the London Trades Council. See Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, pp. 59–60.

16 In January *Le Bulletin* had denounced Sellier for an article of December 1876 in which he had declared 'autonomy has killed the International. Autonomy, we must realise means *division*; we are for *centralisation*', *Le Bulletin*, 14 January 1876. See also Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 120. Kropotkin seems to have had some sympathy with a complaint from the Verviétois about *Le Bulletin* dragging a piece from De Paepe's journal, *L'Economie sociale* published eight months before, into their argument against Sellier. The piece referred to, 'Confession d'un Révolutionnaire', had called on revolutionaries to forgive the executioners of Versailles. (The Jurassians had continued to support *L'Economie Sociale* but Kropotkin had a low opinion of it.) See Kropotkin's letter to Robin, 4 February 1877.

17 In an editorial note, *Le Mirabeau*, July 1877, declared: 'We are happy to know all about the movement now in Italy and to *finally know the truth about their* ACTIVE PROPAGANDA WHICH HAS ALL OUR SYMPATHY.' See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 251.

18 Guillaume claimed that Kropotkin's visit had had no immediate effect: 'He saw the workers with whom he had been associated five years before again: but did not secure any immediate result.' Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 134. It was only some months later that the situation had improved as a result of the efforts of *Le Cercle Etincelle* helped by the Jurassians and Italians. 'Le Cercle Etincelle . . . was an active centre of propaganda; and thanks to its activity, thanks also to the intervention of the Jurassians and Italians, revolutionary ideas will be seen to regain their natural place in *Le Mirabeau*.' Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, p. 120.

19 In spite of a promise on the part of Fluse to support the anarchist position energetically, a compromise resolution had been agreed at the workers' Congress at Ghent, 1 April 1877, which, whilst it did not demand, did urge participation by workers' associations in political agitation. This had elicited

adverse reaction from both sides. The Flemish leaders had begun to make plans to establish a Parti Démocrate Socialiste Belge without the Walloons, Guillaume had urged Kropotkin to protest to Fluse. Unity with the Flemings would harm rather than strengthen the movement he had declared, concessions had already changed the programme of *Le Mirabeau* out of all recognition and to no effect since the Flemings were now intent on forming a separate party. 'You would need to make Fluse clearly aware of all that; to make him understand that you do not gain strength from an alliance where you sacrifice your principles, quite the contrary you lose it'. Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, pp. 176–80.

20 Letter to Robin, 27 February 1877.

21 *L'Avant-Garde*, 15 June 1877.

22 *L'Avant-Garde*, 28 July 1877.

23 'Les Trade Unions', *Le Bulletin*, 27 May, 17 and 24 June, 15 and 22 July 1877. (Translated from articles which had appeared in *L'Arbeiter Zeitung*.)

24 'Les Trade Unions', *Le Bulletin*, 24 June 1877.

25 'Les Trade Unions', *Le Bulletin*, 15 July 1877.

26 'Les Trade Unions', *Le Bulletin*, 22 July 1877.

27 'Affaires d'Amérique', *Le Bulletin*, 5 August 1877. He also wrote briefly about the strikes in his leader article, 'Bulletin International', for *Le Bulletin*, 11 August 1877. For a discussion of these strikes, see Marianne Debouzy, 'Grève et violence de classe aux Etats-Unis', in *Le Mouvement social*, January–March 1978, pp. 41–66.

28 The polarisation between workers and bourgeoisie was not as clear as Kropotkin believed it to be. It would seem that some of the latter sympathised with the strikers. Moreover the militia and the National Guard had on some occasions fraternised with the strikers even giving them arms. See Debouzy, 'Grève et violence aux Etats Unis', pp. 60–5.

29 In May, in response to the judgement of the Supreme Court against a law to impose the eight-hour day, Kropotkin had attacked the American Labor Party for having been diverted from revolutionary aims by proposals for parliamentary reforms just like the German Social Democratic party. See *Le Bulletin*, 10 June 1877.

30 Kropotkin may have overestimated the part played by trade unionism. In fact union organisations were still weak among the railway workers. There was only one, the Trainmen's Union in Pittsburg, which united all the workers into one union. The revolutionary character of the strikes was particularly evident in Pittsburg, and Robert Ammon of the Trainmen's Union played an important part in them. See Debouzy, 'Grève et violence aux Etats-Unis', pp. 45 and 49–50. Kropotkin however was quite right when he insisted on the limited aims of the strikers for, in spite of their slogan, 'Bread or Blood', they continued in their efforts to negotiate an agreement with the company throughout the duration of the strikes in Pittsburg. See Debouzy, 'Grève et violence aux Etats-Unis', p. 49.

31 'La Grève d'Amérique', *Le Travailleur*, September 1877.

32 Letter to Robin, 3 July 1877.

33 *Le Bulletin*, 18 November 1877.

34 'A propos du discours de Ballivet', *La Vie Ouvrière*, 5 July 1910. See also letter from Kropotkin to Peter Wintsch, 3 January 1912. IISG. The section of the report on parliamentarism, Kropotkin says, was written by himself and Brousse, and he links it with his articles on the same subject in *Le Bulletin*, 22 and 29 July 1877.
35 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, IV, p. 312.
36 *La Première Internationale en Espagne*, pp. 307–8.
37 See the report in *L'Avant-Garde*, 12 August 1878.
38 *Le Révolté*, 22 February 1879. The comment appeared in the column about the social movement which was written by Kropotkin.
39 *Le Révolté*, 10 January 1880. Hope turned to anger when the Parti Socialiste Belge succeeded in exercising a moderating influence on the strikers and vehement condemnation of the activities of the PSB appeared in *Le Révolté*, 2 February 1880.
40 *Le Révolté*, 11 December 1880. It is interesting that in a letter to Malatesta in June 1881 he declared that there was support for the anarchists amongst the unions of Geneva particularly after the Federation's recent protests against the hangings in Russia. He mentioned the unions of Mechanics, Carpenters and Masons. See letter to Malatesta, June 1881, Kropotkin–Malatesta Correspondence, IISG.
41 See 'L'Idée Anarchiste au point de vue de sa réalisation pratique', in the Congress Report, *Le Révolté*, 11 November 1879, and Daniel Guérin's *Ni Dieu ni maître*, II, pp. 99–104. The reference to *intrigants ambitieux* undoubtedly means trade union leaders with a moderate approach, particularly radicals.
42 See *Memoire présenté au Congrès Jurassien de 1880 par la fédération ouvrière de Courtelary*, in Guérin, *Ni Dieu ni maître*, II, p. 119.
43 Report in *L'Avant-Garde*, 12 August 1878.
44 Report of the Congress of the Jura Federation at La Chaux-de-Fonds, 1880 in *Le Révolté*, 17 October 1880. See also Guérin, *Ni Dieu ni maître*, II, p. 110. Reclus had insisted: 'We must not lose sight of the groupings of revolutionary forces which are set up freely, outside any communal organisation.' Schwitzguébel's idea nevertheless persisted in the Jura, for it was mentioned by Werner at the Congress of the Federation in June 1882. See *Le Révolté*, 24 June 1882.
45 *Le Révolté*, 31 May 1879. As the number of *chambres syndicales* increased so did the trade union involvement in the increasing number of strikes of this period. The percentage of 19 per cent in 1878 had risen to 27 per cent in 1880 and 39 per cent in 1881 and 1882. See Perrot, *Les Ouvriers en grève*, p. 90.
46 *Le Révolté*, 30 October 1880.
47 See 'Socialisme en France', *Le Révolté*, 15 November 1879. The Congress adopted the following aim: 'the collective ownership of the land subsoil, instruments of labour and raw materials given to all and rendered inalienable by society to whom they must rıeturn.' *Séances du congrès ouvrier de France. 3e session tenue à Marseille du 20 au 31 Octobre 1879 à la salle des Folies Bergères*, 1879, p. 814.
48 'Le Parti Ouvrier Français', *Le Révolté*, 5 February 1881.

49 The anarchists however were a very forceful minority. As Grave himself put it: 'With reason, they have described us as *demi-quarteron*. We were no more but we did enough work for a hundred.' *Quarante ans de propagande*, p. 160.

50 'As for the representation of the proletariat on elected bodies, the Congress declares it will make one last experiment in the municipal and legislative elections of 81, and, if it it not successful to choose again purely and simply only revolutionary action.

The Congress will adopt as a basis for the elections of 1881 a minimum programme but invites all constituencies which are able to have a more pronounced programme to act in the same sense.' *Le Révolté*, 27 November 1880.

51 Letter, 26 January 1881. Microfilm IISG of Kropotkin's letters in the State Archive of Vienna, Information Bureau 143 (1881) 51/ad 1525.

52 'Les Enemis du peuple', *Le Révolté*, 5 February 1881. Cf. the New Year editorial, *Le Révolté*, 22 January 1881.

53 *Le Révolté*, 14 May 1881. Actually, 25 per cent of strikes in 1882 were concerned with the demand for the ten-hour day. Interestingly enough it had fallen from 22 per cent in 1880 to 14 per cent in 1881, the year of the proposed ten-hour bill. See Perrot, *Les Ouvriers en grève*, I, p. 90.

54 'Le Mouvement Ouvrier en Espagne', *Le Révolté*, 12 November 1881. It seems possible that the article was written by Kropotkin, for, although expelled from Switzerland, he stayed near the border at Thonon until November.

55 'Le Parti Ouvrier Français', *Le Révolté*, 5 February 1881.

56 'La Ligue et les Trade Unions', *Le Révolté*, 1 October 1881.

57 Three months later *Le Révolté* declared, 'It is only in Ireland where a permanent strike of landworkers, taking the upper hand in the political cucrent, has continued to develop and enlarge its ideas.' *Le Révolté*, 7 January 1882. *The Irish National Land League*, created in 1879, actually combined agrarian terrorism at the grass roots level led by Michael Davitt, with parliamentary agitation led by Parnell at Westminster. The tactic of 'boycott' actually originated in the League's campaign against high rents which was successfully applied against a Captain Boycott in 1880. See Sean Cronin, *The Revolutionaries* (Dublin, 1971), pp. 117–25.

58 Parnell's approach was certainly more moderate than that of Davitt. The cry of 'Land for the People' seems to have been a feature of the popular reaction early on. After a meeting of Davitt's in Irishtown, 19 April 1879 this cry apparently resounded through the town. See Cronin, *The Revolutionaries*, pp. 118–20.

59 See Kropotkin's letters in State Archive of Vienna, Information Bureau 143 (1881) 51/ad 1525.

60 Circular letter to Malatesta *et al.*, June 1881, Kropotkin–Malatesta Correspondence, IISG.

61 'L'Organisation ouvrière', *Le Révolté*, 10 and 24 December 1881. Although the articles were as usual unsigned, it is clear from the text that they were written by the same author as l'Esprit de révolte: 'In the Spirit of Revolt we have shown how the peasants of the last century' etc. It would seem reasonable therefore to suppose that Kropotkin must have been the author, particularly in view of the contents of his circular letter of June 1881.

62 This was obviously directed at the guesdists and the Parti Ouvrier who did not encourage strikes although they supported them once they had begun. See Willard, *Les Guesdistes*, pp. 33–4. Kropotkin actually went on to complain that they had held aloof from the recent wave of strikes. In the next issue, *Le Révolté* declared that the Parti Ouvrier had recently urged strikers at La Grand'Combe to keep calm and vote for POF candidates if they wanted emancipation. See *Le Révolté*, 7 January 1882. There had been a peak of strike activity in France and the period 1880–2 was a period of vigorously 'offensive' strikes. See Perrot, *Les Ouvriers en grève*, I, pp. 89–90.

63 He illustrated this point by referring to the building workers of Barcelona who had recently shared their meagre wages with strikers struggling to secure a nine-and-a-half hour day. In July, *Le Révolté* had reported the success of the builders' strike for the eight-hour day in Barcelona, declaring that this success had been achieved because of the strength of the workers' organisation. See *Le Révolté*, 9 July 1881.

64 See report in *Le Révolté*, 10 December 1881. The strikers were miners who, desperate for food, broke into grocers' shops.

65 *Le Révolté*, 8 July 1882. The idea that the organised section of labour should reflect and support spontaneous popular initiatives was hardly an idea which would have appealed to bakuninists like Viñas.

66 Certainly the first serious quarrels only surfaced after the Congress of the Spanish Federation at Seville in September 1882, but the tension generated by the basic differences in approach between the revolutionary rural movement of the south and the more urban trade union movement of the north was already very evident. See Lida, *Agrarian Anarchists of Andalusia*, pp. 333–6, also Renée Lamberet, 'Les Travailleurs espagnols et leur conception de l'anarchie de 1868 au debut du XX[e] siècle', in *Anarchici e anarchia nel mondo contemporaneo* (Turin, 1971), pp. 78–94.

67 See the report of the Congress in *Le Révolté*, 24 June 1882.

68 It is worth noting however that the Genevan Group had sent a strong letter of protest to *Le Révolté* when the group in Bordeaux refused to help strikers of Lyon on the grounds that strikes did not achieve anything. See *Le Révolté*, 13 March 1882.

69 See *Le Révolté*, 8 July 1882.

70 See Brécy, *La Grève générale en France*, p. 24; also Perrot, *Les Ouvriers en grève*, p. 495. The meeting was organised by twenty-two *chambres syndicales* in the building trades, and was attended by 2,000 workers according to a report in *Le Révolté* 12–18 November 1887.

71 *Le Révolté*, 18 March 1882. This same attitude is apparent a few years later in the *Revue Anarchiste Internationale*, a paper published in Bordeaux from 1884 to 1885. For example in February 1885 it declared that 'the strikes are only parliamentarism, they [the workers] will only find satisfaction for their needs by making a revolution.'

72 See reports on the social movement in *Le Révolté*, January–March 1882.

73 *Le Révolté*, 7 January 1882.

74 *Le Révolté*, 18 March 1882. On 4 March 1882, *Le Révolté* had reported, with obvious relish, a rumour to the effect that the miners had attempted to

blow up the ventilator to stop the mine being worked, but it had been disappointed by the strikers' indignant insistence that the rumour was a lie; in the opinion of the paper such an act of sabotage was just what the workers should have undertaken.

75 *Le Révolté*, 10 June 1882. Perrot has noted the dynamism of the strike movement which was developing in the great industrial regions apart from Paris during the period 1878–1882. See *Les Ouvriers en grève*, I, p. 91.

76 See Willard, *Les Guesdistes*, pp. 20–4. Maitron points out that in fact the collectivists regarded their share of the vote at the legislative elections as evidence of success rather than defeat. (According to Guesde they polled 60,000 votes, according to Brousse 65,000.) See Maitron, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en France*, I, p. 108. According to Stafford however, the fact that the Parti Ouvrier had only increased their share of the vote by 20,000 since the municipal elections of January, made it difficult for the guesdists to insist that socialist progress had not been checked. The broussists had been unhappy about fighting the election on the minimum programme. See Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism*, pp. 172–98, for an account of the squabbles between broussists and guesdists which ended in the split at the St Etienne Congress of 1882.

77 *Le Révolté*, 30 September 1882.

78 *Le Révolté*, 14 October 1882.

79 See report of the meeting of the Jura Federation in July 1883 in *Le Révolté*, 18 August 1883.

80 *Le Révolté*, 19 August 1882.

81 'Les Ecueils de la révolution', *Le Révolté*, 30 March 1884. The period 1883 to 1888 has been described by Perrot as a period of economic crisis in which the majority of strikes were defensive (67 per cent in 1884, 69 per cent in 1885 and 57 per cent in 1886) and unsuccessful (71 per cent in 1884, 72 per cent in 1885 and 54 per cent in 1886). Trade union involvement fell to 39 per cent in the years 1881–1882 and to 20 per cent in 1886, whilst a considerable proportion of strikes of the period were spontaneous expressions of anger and desperation by the workers and their wretched situation (40 per cent with a peak of 47 per cent in 1883). The depression certainly had a damaging effect on the trade union movement – many of them disappeared at this time. See Perrot, *Les Ouvriers en grève*, I, pp. 92–4.

82 *Le Révolté*, 13 April 1884. See also 'Les Grèves', *Le Révolté*, 27 April 1884. The strike which ended in defeat, lasted 56 days. See Perrot, *Les Ouvriers en grève*, I, p. 93. Basly was a miners' deputy in the National Assembly with moderate views. Roche was a blanquist.

83 'La Grève vaincue', *Le Révolté*, 26 June–2 July 1886. The Decazeville strike, which was spontaneous and involved the lynching of Watrin, a hated deputy manager, lasted 109 days. See Perrot, *Les Ouvriers en grève*, I, p. 93. Detailed reports appeared in *Le Révolté* from February to May. The leaders condemned by the paper were again Basly and Roche and a guesdist, Quercy.

84 *Le Révolté*, 11–23 April 1886. In 1885 the workers' organisations of Belgium had finally agreed to unite in the *Parti Ouvrier Belge*, adopting what was essentially a political programme. Areas where anarchist sympathies were strong seem to have been won over by the solidarity displayed to the miners

of the Borinage and Charleroi regions during the strike of the winter of 1884–1885 when the cooperative socialist bakeries of Ghent, as well as those of Brussels, supplied the strikers with wagon loads of bread. However, the severity of the economic crisis of 1886, which in Liège had resulted in a reduction of miners' wages, enabled anarchists to spark off a series of violent incidents culminating in a violent strike which spread from the miners of Liège to those of Charleroi and the Borinage. At Charleroi there were serious riots. The strikes were savagely crushed by troops with fourteen strikers killed and many others injured. The leaders of the POB, fearful of the repression of workers' organisations which they believed would surely follow, could only appeal for calm. For accounts of the strikes see Vandermeulen, *Le Mouvement ouvrier socialiste à Verviers*, pp. 16–17, Bertrand, *Histoire de la démocratie*, II, pp. 399–410.

85 Anarchists were trying to influence trade union action at Vienne. *Le Révolté*, 11–23 April 1886, carried a report that a large meeting of the Sheet Makers' Union, organised in response to a reduction in wages on 26 March, had chosen a committee dominated by anarchists. One of them, Pierre Martin, had given a powerful speech calling for violent strike action as a prelude to revolution.

86 'Les Grèves', *Le Révolté*, 27 April 1884.

87 *Le Révolté*, 28 February–14 March 1886. In fact the miners probably knew little or nothing about socialist ideas in general. 'Thoroughly good folk who lacked but one thing, *a socialist education*', *Le Révolté* had declared in the issue 28 March–10 April 1886. But this posed fewer problems for propagandists like Basly because of the Parti Ouvrier's association with the labour movement.

88 'Question de tactique', *Le Révolté*, 7–13 October 1892. The article formed part of an editorial comment on the particularly acrid debate between Malatesta and Pomati in *Le Révolté* over the question of anarchist relations with the trade union movement.

89 In March 1886 the small but very active anarchist group at Liège called on the workers to join a demonstration to commemorate the Paris Commune. On 18 March, thousands of workers converged on Liège in an angry and excited mood. The attempt of a moderate leader, Warnotte of Verviers, to calm the demonstrators was finally drowned in calls for dynamite and the singing of the *Marseillaise*. See Bertrand, *Histoire de la démocratie*, pp. 394–9, also Vandermeulen, *Le Mouvement ouvrier socialiste à Verviers*, pp. 17–19. The demonstration ended in violence, and, as we have seen, violent strikes associated with the demonstration spread to other areas. An anarchist speaker at a meeting to form a '*chambre syndicale*', 22 March, accused Warnotte of having checked the revolutionary movement at Liège. See Vandermeulen, *Le Mouvement ouvrier socialiste à Verviers*, p. 19.

90 *Le Syndicalisme dans l'évolution sociale* (Paris, 1908), p. 3.

91 Letter to Guillaume, 6 August 1907 quoted by Nettlau in *Histoire de l'anarchie,*, pp. 255–6.

92 Cf. his letter to the Jura Federation, *Le Révolté*, 8 July 1882 and 'La Pratique de l'expropriation', *Le Révolté*, 10–16 and 17–23 July 1880.

93 'Les Insurrections en Belgique', *Le Révolté*, 5–11 February 1887.

94 'La Guerre sociale', *Le Révolté*, 15–21 May 1886. The Knights of Labour were a masonic type of order which catered generally for all trades but did include craft societies of an exclusive type. Its membership increased rapidly 1886–1887. See Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, pp. 95–6. The eight-hour-day movement, however, had been initiated by the 6th Congress of the American Federation of Labor at Chicago in 1884. It had precipitated a huge movement, and the demonstrations of 1 May 1886 involved 340,000 strikers. The American Federation of Labor declared, 'Never in the history of this country has there been such a general protest of the industrial masses.' See Brécy, *La Grève générale en France*, pp. 19–20.

95 See report of a meeting at Lyon, 15 May, addressed by Bordat and Martin in *Le Révolté*, 22–8 May 1886. 'Like companion Martin, he [Bordat] ended by inviting the workers to group themselves outside and against the different political parties, in a way which would not allow the revolution which is being prepared to be spirited away by new politicians'. Martin had spoken about the situation at Decazeville so it is conceivable that the anarchists had some sort of revolutionary strike organisation in mind. The leader article 'Au gui l'an neuf', *Le Révolté*, 1–7 January 1887, however, lamenting the inadequacy of working class organisation for revolution, indicated that such an idea was unrelated to practical realities and possibilities. Moreover the articles 'L'Organisation ouvrière' did not appear in *Les Paroles d'un révolté*.

96 'Le Premier mai 1891', *La Révolte*, 18–24 October 1890. Kropotkin was referring to the incident at the McCormick Harvester Works, 3 May, where police fired on strikers during a clash between strikers and blacklegs. Anarchists had led the protest against the shooting, but although Spies had actually issued a call to arms, they had not been directly involved in the strike movement itself. Because of this Kropotkin believed they had missed a real opportunity to encourage revolt which had not recurred.

97 See letter to Bertoni, 27 April 1913, IISG.

98 'Ce que c'est qu'une grève', *Le Révolté*, 7 September 1889.

99 'Le Mouvement ouvrier en Angleterre', *La Révolte*, 13 September 1890.

100 'L'Action des masses et l'individu', *La Révolte*, 24 May 1890; 'Allez-vous en', *La Révolte*, 4 October 1890.

101 'Le premier mai', *La Révolte*, 24 October 1890.

102 'Les Grèves Anglaises', *La Révolte*, 21 February 1891.

103 'La Mort de la nouvelle internationale', *La Révolte*, 17 October 1891.

104 *Freedom*, September 1901.

105 Letter to Bertoni, 2 March 1914, IISG.

106 Letter to Grave, 3 July 1902, IISG.

107 Letter to Herzig, 28 February 1906, Wintsch Collection IISG.

CONCLUSION

1 'Peter Kropotkin at Work', *Freedom*, February 1921.

2 Anthony D'Agostino, *Marxism and the Russian Anarchists* (San Francisco, 1977), p. 80.

3 Marie Fleming, 'Propaganda by the Deed: Terrorism and Anarchist Theory in

Late Nineteenth Century Europe', in *Terrorism in Europe*, ed. Yonah Alexander and Kenneth A. Myers (London, 1982), p. 14.

4 'L'Organisation ouvrière' was not republished with the other main articles from *Le Révolté* in *Les Paroles d'un révolté* in 1885, possibly because both Reclus and Kropotkin concluded that at this time there was little enthusiasm for the 'Internationale Gréviste' in the anarchist movement.

5 Miller, *Kropotkin*, pp. 175–6.

6 D'Agostino, *Marxism and the Russian Anarchists*, p. 77.

7 Linse, 'Propaganda by the Deed and Direct Action: Two Concepts of Anarchist Violence', p. 207.

8 Fleming, 'Propaganda by the Deed: Terrorism and Anarchist Theory in Late Nineteenth Century Europe', p. 18.

9 *Memoirs*, p. 105. It is significant here to note that pamphlets by Malatesta based on the same approach as that advocated by Kropotkin seem to have been particularly successful. According to Grave 95,000 copies of Malatesta's *Entre Paysans* and also of Reclus' *A Mon Frère le Paysan* were produced. See Grave, *Quarante ans de propagande*, pp. 559–60.

10 *Die erste Blütezeit der Anarchie (1886–1894)* IISG, p. 31.

11 Letter to Brandes, 29 May 1896 in *Correspondance de Georg Brandes*, ed. P. Kruger (Copenhagen, 1952–66), II, letter no. 367.

12 'Le Premier mai', *La Révolte*, 1–7 November 1890.

13 See 'Peter Kropotkin – Recollections and Criticisms of an Old Friend', *Studi Sociali*, 15 April 1931, quoted in *Malatesta: His Life and Ideas*, ed. Vernon Richards (London, 1977), p. 268.

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